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WHEN YELLOW JASMINE BLOOMS

WHEN YELLOW JASMINE BLOOMS

A Story of the Southland

BY

ALICE J. CALHOUN

NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1904

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WHEN YELLOW JASMINE BLOOMS.

CHAPTER I

ON THE LAWN

" 'In spite of a cruel fate which separated them for five years, Arthur Norman remained true to Blanch Trevor, and when he returned to his native land they were married and lived in peace and happiness ever after.' " Mrs. Eva Lake closed the book from which she had been reading and laughed. "Now, girls," she said, "that is what I call pure and simple nonsense. Fancy any man remaining true to his betrothed five years. Out of sight is out of mind with most people. Do you not agree with me?"

There was a chorus of protest from the three girls assembled on the lawn in front of a beautiful Alabama home. It was the month of April—the month of smiles and tears. The smiles, only, were visible; the tears seemed far away, but who can say they were not lurking behind that cloud in the west—a cloud so small that the gay group on the lawn heeded it not. But be assured the clouds and tears are always to be seen in the sky above, even as sorrow and tears are ever present in every life. But to the company on the lawn life was made up of sunshine and happiness; and all nature seemed to rejoice with

them. The birds were singing their sweetest songs; the bees and butterflies were tasting only the honey in every blossom; the busy ants on the ground at their feet were working as if the success of every enterprise in the world depended upon the haste they could make. And from the graceful branches of a beautiful water-oak long wreaths of yellow jasmine were drooping; and here and there, like spots of sunshine on the bright green grass, were seen the jasmine bells that had been plucked from the parent stem by the southern breeze.

"So you do not agree with me, girls. I wonder how many of you will hold the same opinion five years hence. Now, Lily and Dora, do not believe I wish to shake your faith in Hugh and Charley."

"Oh!" cried Lily and Dora, "Hugh and Charley can be trusted not to forget us even if they were cast away on a desert island."

"And what do you say, Valerie?" asked Mrs. Lake. "Can you trust Philip even if he has to keep company with Hugh and Charley on the desert island where Lily and Dora have sent them?"

"Philip will be faithful to his plighted word, Eva, even as I will be faithful to mine forever and ever," answered Valerie solemnly.

Mrs. Lake laughed. She had a soft, low voice: and was fair and sweet to look upon, her husband thought as he rode in the direction of the stables on his return from the post-office in Oakland. When he saw his wife and her guests on the lawn he dismounted from his splendid brown Arabian, Saladin,

and drawing the bridle reins under the throat latch in such a way that they could not drag on the ground, he spoke a few words to the horse, which sent him galloping to his stall, where Judge Daniel Jackson, the dusky stable-boy, was lying on the grass in the sunshine, fast asleep and in the land of dreams.

"I's mighty sleepy," the Judge had muttered two hours before. "It wus mos' day w'en I got in las' night fum dat 'possum hunt, en I didn't sleep hardly none 'fore I had ter git up en make de fire in de stove fer mammy ter git breakfas'. Young niggers does hev er hard time sho'. I kin lay down here en sleep dis feelin' offen me en den git up en finish plowin' de gyarden 'fore Marse Wilfred gits back. I knows I kin. En dat pore ole mule looks lack he tired, too. I'll give him er little res', I will; it'll do him good."

So Judge stretched himself on the soft grass in front of the stable door, and the next minute was asleep and with Tom and Ben, following the dogs as they bounded through the woods with their noses to the ground, searching for the tracks of the 'possum. At last they struck the trail and away they ran, with redoubled speed, across the hills and through the soft bottom fields. The briars through which the 'possum led them seemed to be thicker than Judge had ever found them before. But he kept on in spite of them, and was close behind the dogs when the 'possum took refuge in a hollow oak. The Judge put his hand in the hollow tree, but try as he would

he could not reach the 'possum. "I can't git him," he said; "I'll hatter run over yonner ter Uncle Mose's house en borry er ax ter cut de tree down, less'en one ov you boys will be so 'commodatin' es ter go fer me."

"Go yerse'f, Jedge, we's too tired," answered Tom and Ben.

"All right," said Judge, "I'll go. Dat 'possum is wuth es much es er quarter; hit ain't no more'n two mile ter Uncle Mose's. I'll be back in less'en no time." He soon returned, and cut the tree without any assistance from Tom and Ben. The next instant his labor would be rewarded—the 'possum would be his. But in dreams, as in our waking moments, disappointment often takes the place of expected pleasure. In that moment when the tree was falling something soft and warm was pressed in his face; and Judge sprang to his feet with a yell of terror to see Saladin standing over him.

"Gracious yerth, Sallydan! Yer most skeered me; I didn't know but what er snake had fell on my haid. Yer is er turrible hoss, puttin' yer nose in my face datter way. Now I's got ter hurry," he said, as he took the saddle and bridle off Saladin and rubbed him down—"now I's got ter hurry ter git dat gyarden plowed 'fore night. I hopes daddy en none ov de white folks won' be comin' 'roun' here dis evenin'. Dey t'ink I kin wuck all de time."

He put Saladin in his stall, picked up the plow bridle and went to catch his mule; but Pompey saw him coming and went to the farthest corner of the

lot. "I don't want no nonsense dis evenin', Pompey; don' yer see dat sun will soon be set? Come on here; I ain't got no time ter was'e." He led Pompey out and began to search for something. "Whey's dem lines en dat collar? Seems lack t'ings is mighty hard ter fin' when er pusson gits in er hurry; oh, here dey is; now, ef nobody don' come 'roun' I'll git dat wuck done.

Fortune favored Judge and he finished the work as the shades of evening were falling.

Wilfred Lake, the owner of the broad acres stretching before him, crossed the lawn and joined the ladies under the oak trees. He took off his hat and saluted them with courtly grace and pleasant smile and he handed letters and magazines to three of the ladies. "Nothing for you, Miss Lily. This *Daily Register* is for me; perhaps you and Valerie would like to look over the cotton report while the others read their letters."

"Oh, I am not disappointed," said Lily; "I was not expecting a letter to-day."

"I get a letter every day, Brother Wilfred; surely there is one in the office for me now," said Valerie.

"Who knows but Philip went driving yesterday along the beautiful Shell road with one of those lovely Mobile girls and forgot to write, Valerie? Such things have happened," said her brother, with mock gravity.

"Do not mind him, Valerie," said Eva, looking up from the letter she was reading. "He is only teasing you; put your fingers in his pocket and you

will find a letter; I see the corner of an envelope." A bright smile illumined Valerie's beautiful face as she held out her hand.

"Thank you for helping me, Eva," she said as her brother gave her the letter.

They were happy that lovely afternoon, and the sound of their voices in merry conversation and gay laughter floated away on the April breeze like the ringing of silver bells. At last Mrs. Lake gathered up her magazines and the book she had been reading aloud. "Wilfred, we really must return to the house; will you come with us, Mrs. Gray; or do you prefer to remain here and listen to the singing of that mocking-bird in the jasmine vine?"

"I will come with you. I have some letters to write."

They had not proceeded far in the direction of the house when two little boys, followed by a very small terrier, ran to meet them.

"O father," said Eugene, a delicate looking child of five years, "please come with Bertie and me to the lake and help us to sail the new boat Uncle Jasper has made for us."

Wilfred Lake smiled and held out a hand to each little boy.

"Jasper can sail the boat for you as well as I can; run away and ask him to go with you."

"We can't find Uncle Jasper," said Eugene. "Aunt Phebe says he has gone somewhere to get something."

His father laughed.

"I do not wonder, then, that two such little men failed to find him. 'Somewhere' is a very indefinite location. Older, if not wiser, heads than yours might well be puzzled. Have you seen Judge? Get him to go with you."

"Judge is working and can't come; we want you," said four-year-old Bertram.

"In that case I will have to go with you; it will not be the first time that a landsman has been pressed into service upon the high seas."

Wilfred Lake opened the gate for his wife and Mrs. Gray, then left them and went away with the little boys.

"Is there a lake in this vicinity?" asked Mrs. Gray. "I do not remember having seen one."

"Oh, yes," answered Eva, "Valerie and the children have a lake in miniature just beyond the rose garden. They persuaded Uncle Jasper to build it for them last summer. It is fifteen feet in diameter and three feet deep, and made water tight with brick and cement. Valerie has water hyacinths growing and blooming along the edge of the water. And every day Eugene and Bertie sail their poplar boats and feed the fish in their wee lake; and I dare say the owner of the finest yacht which glides across the waters between the Old and New World is not prouder of his vessel than these little boys are of their boats. The world renowned Lake Como and the lovely waters of Killarney will never be more beautiful to them than their own Hyacinth Lake. Wilfred is so indulgent with the children; he quite

spoils them, I tell him, especially Eugene, who has been very delicate since he had measles a few months ago. Doctor Stanley—my cousin Philip, you know—advises us to keep him out of doors as much as possible."

"I have noticed," said Mrs. Gray, "that Eugene is quite different from any little child I have ever known; but few boys of three times his age have gained as much knowledge as he has. I feel when he looks steadily at me with his serious blue eyes that he is weighing me in the balance; and I am sure I do not always meet with his approval."

Eva laughed somewhat nervously.

"Shall I tell you how Wilfred and I incurred his displeasure, or, perhaps I should say, we deeply wounded him, a few days before you came?"

"Yes, dear, do tell me. I am much interested in that most remarkable child."

Mrs. Lake hesitated a moment, then lowered her voice and said:

"You may know, Mrs. Gray, that lovely roses and lilies bloom in the burying-ground in Oakland, one mile from here, and every one who wishes to do so feels at perfect liberty to gather them. And the Reverend Mr. Hatton, a very religious man, with Wilfred and several other gentlemen, hauled away the cedars that were cut down where they were too thick, intending to use them for fence posts. Now I do not see that there was anything wrong in cutting the flowers and using the cedars, but Valerie has always been much opposed to that very general,

in fact, universal practice, and insists that it is a very heartless thing to do. And Eugene, that little child, that infant, wept and utterly refused to touch one of the roses, although I did my utmost to persuade him to help me when I arranged them in vases. I shall not tell you all he said, but he told me, among other things, that we were desecrating the burying-ground, and he succeeded in making me feel very uncomfortable. And Wilfred says he made him feel so much like a criminal about the cedar posts that he could not use them, and Uncle Jasper has been getting cypress for the new fence. Wilfred told Eugene that Mr. Hatton, a good, religious man, did not hesitate to make use of the flowers and cedars. What reply do you suppose Eugene made?"

"I am sure I do not know, my dear Eva. Tell me."

"He answered that the minister might be a religious man, but while he held such ideas he could not be Godly! Just think of that, and he only five years old!"

Mrs. Gray lifted her hands and eyes in amazement.

"Let us talk of something else," she said; "Eugene is too deep for me.

"How beautiful Valerie has grown since I saw her two years ago; she was an exceedingly pretty child but I did not think she would ever be such a beautiful woman. I am not surprised that the fastidious Philip Stanley should have selected her for his wife.

Do tell me about them. Are they to be married soon?"

"Oh, no; Valerie is only seventeen. They will not be married until her twenty-first birthday."

"In that case," said Mrs. Gray, "it is safe to predict that they will never marry. It is but seldom that a man's constancy—or a woman's either—withstands a test of four years' duration. There are but few Jacobs in this day and generation."

"I quite agree with you, Mrs. Gray. I believe their engagement will come to an end within the next twelve months. Now, please do not believe I am one of those who tattle for the mere pleasure to be derived in saying unkind things; but I know this that I am going to tell you is perfectly safe with you —you will never repeat it?"

"Certainly not, Eva."

"I do not know that I ought to tell even so intimate a friend as you are, but surely it can do no harm. Before Wilfred and I were married, Philip, who is my cousin, paid me marked attention, and I am sure he loved me, and I could have—but there, I will not say it. I preferred Wilfred, who is the best, the truest, the most honorable of any in the world."

Mrs. Gray smiled.

"Philip and Valerie," continued Eva, "met at Saratoga last summer, and it seems to have been a case of love at first sight. Philip was fascinated by her grace and wonderful beauty, though I doubt if he loves her very much. But Valerie, who has one of

those passionate, impulsive temperaments, loves him with that rare, deep, intense love which one reads of in books but which one rarely meets with in real life. Pride and resentment have no place in her heart; love, kindness and gentleness fill it completely. Philip is at the hospital in Mobile, having been called to the bedside of his friend Captain Seymour, who has been very ill, and Valerie expects, and gets, a letter from him by every mail. And to-day, when Wilfred, through a spirit of mischief, withheld her letter, she forgot her pride and was on the verge of tears. 'Pride!' " exclaimed Eva, a little scornfully, "I am sure she has none where love is concerned. She is so meek and sweet I believe it would be impossible for Philip to make her quarrel with him and break her engagement. No doubt she will some day be as watchful of danger to Philip and as obedient as Tennyson's heroine, the gentle Enid."

Do not harshly condemn Eva Lake for speaking disparagingly of her sister-in-law; she meant no harm, nor is she worse than many thousands of the daughters of Eve. It remains to be seen whether or not she was correct in her estimate of Valerie's character. Eva soon went away to attend to some housekeeping duties and Mrs. Gray ascended the stairs and entered her room to write her letters. The three girls walked about the lawn until warned by the lengthening shadows that night was approaching; they returned by the rose garden and gathered clusters of fragrant, golden Marechal Neil and brilliant Jacqueminot roses for the drawing-room.

For an hour before sunset Wilfred Lake gladdened the hearts of his two little boys by helping them to sail their wonderful new boat. And when the breeze filled the white sails and it safely crossed the lake, their delight was unbounded; and Mitts, the white-footed terrier, raced around the wee lake barking excitedly. Then as the sun was bidding adieu to the day, vanishing beyond the sea of pale blue clouds that the shadows of night might come and bring repose to weary nature, an old woman, with a bright smile on her wrinkled face, was seen approaching the busy idlers at the lake.

"It is time these children were in the house, Aunt Patty," said Wilfred kindly.

"That's what I come fer, Marse Wilfred," she answered. "Come er long honeys." And the little boys reluctantly went with their old mammy.

"I dunno what Marse Wilfred's thinking erbout," she said to herself, "keepin' dese chillun out w'en de jew is er fallin', en den ter tell me it's time dey wus in jest lack I didn't know hit; 'pears lack he fergits I knows more erbout some t'ings dan he do. I sholy ought ter, w'en I nussed him w'en he wa'n't no bigger than Baby Eva, en she ain't three years old yit."

Bertram, a sturdy, playful child, ran on ahead of Mammy, followed by the little dog, their constant companion. Eugene walked by her side with his hand clasping her fingers.

"Mammy," he said, "do the flowers sleep at night like little children?" Mammy was puzzled for a

moment, then answered slowly, as if the thought were new to her:

"I don't know, honey; dey mout en dey moutn't. I ain't never noticed 'em at night pussenly myse'f and can't say positive. I know one thing erbout de flowers dat ain't lack little boys," she said with a smile, "en dat is dey don't ax hard queschuns."

Eugene regarded her with wondering eyes.

"Mammy," he said, "don't the flowers and birds and wind talk to you like they do to me? Sometimes when Bertie and I are playing the wind whispers to me and it makes me sad. Then I lay my face down among the flowers and the birds come and sing to me and the flowers seem to smile and the sadness goes away. I cannot tell you what they say to me, nor do I understand; perhaps when I get as tall as father I will know."

"Chile, chile, yer min' is too big fer yer little body. Yer ought ter be more lack Bertie en not ax so many hard queschuns en t'ink erbout ferbidden t'ings."

Eugene raised his wondering blue eyes, so like a bit of summer noon-day sky, to his mammy's face.

"Did Mrs. Gray tell you that? She says I ask questions that grown-up people cannot answer, and that I am a very odd little boy. I wonder what she meant, mammy? I want to know."

"She meant, honey, that yer intellects wus mos' too progressin'. Come erlong en don't min' dat grasshopper; it ain't ov no consecrence en it's mos' time little folks had dere supper."

"Oh, please wait a minute, Mammy," cried Eugene; "the ants are stinging it."

He picked up a piece of broken shingle and with a slender twig raised the wounded grasshopper on the shingle, and with Mammy's assistance brushed the ants off it and put it on a small shrub.

"Don't you think the grasshopper is glad to be way up here where the ants cannot get to it tonight? And why," he asked, "did the ants sting it when it was hurted and could not help itself?"

"More queschuns," moaned Aunt Patty; "al'ays axin' hard queschuns. Ef dey ain't erbout one t'ing dey'll be erbout grasshoppers w'at ain't no good fer ennyt'ing so fer as I kin see. It wouldn't er been nothin' ter me nor ter most other folks ef de antses had et it up. Yit here I is he'pin' ter scrape 'em offen it jest ter please dis dear little queschun-axin' chile w'at ain't lack enny other chile. It mus' er been one lack Eugene w'at wus meant when 'twas said 'a little chile shall lead 'em.' Come on now, Bertie's at de gate waitin' fer us."

Eugene obediently accompanied her. There are many who share Aunt Patty's idea that the lower order of life is of no importance; and many would as willingly tread on the creeping insect as step aside and give it a chance to live. But the world is all the better for those whose compassion reaches even the lowest of created things. There is no denying the fact that man must rule or be ruled; there are times without number when it is necessary to kill, and there are also times when it is possible to

help the reptile to live. If man would remember that there is One who sees the sparrows when they fall his justice would be measured with more mercy.

Mammy was mounting the stairs with the children after their mother had given them their supper, when Eugene put one more question to her, which well-nigh made her sink in her steps.

"Mammy," he said, and his unwavering blue eyes rested upon her kindly black face, "where does the day go when the night comes, and where will to-night be in the morning?"

Who can answer the question? Certainly not Aunt Patty, who moaned softly before replying.

"Honey," she said, "de bes' I kin tell yer is de sun rises in the de eas' in de mornin' en trabels all day long twell mos' night, w'en it sets en den de night comes en continers twell de sun rises ergin. En den de night is gone; but whey de day en night dat wus is gone ter I can't pintedly say. I never thought ov it before. En I don't b'l'eve ennybody else but you ever t'ought ov it, neider."

Eugene was not satisfied with this explanation, but he did not press his inquiries further and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER II

THE FRIENDS

"I tell you plainly, Seymour, in your present condition a sea voyage would prove fatal to you; you must have absolute rest for at least three months. The *Semiramis* will have to breast the winds and waves for once without her captain's masterly guidance."

The sick man turned impatiently to the physician.

"And I tell you, Stanley, that it is absolutely necessary for me to be in Bombay in less time than three months. You say I must rest, yet how can I lose the time now when business—nay, more, duty—calls me. I have promised the Q. T. Company, the owners of the *Semiramis,* to bring the ship to Bombay by the first of July. It means much to me. I am not rich like—some one I might mention, and I must work. But I am working more for my sister than for myself. Besides, all day long I hear the voice of the sea calling me. I can see the blue waters of the bay from this window, and just out of sight the *Semiramis* is anchored and waiting for me."

His voice dropped from a high, irritable tone to a low, weak murmur; his wasted hands lay listlessly on the coverlid, his attitude denoting dejection and keen disappointment. The physician's practised eyes swept the patient's face in a swiftly withdrawn

glance, his fingers resting a moment on his wrist. Then he arose, and pouring out a glass of cordial held it to his lips.

"Drink this," he said, "and be quiet; we do not want a relapse just now. You have had a hard fight with slow fever and have come off victorious so far; do not spoil all by this useless longing to return to your ship. I repeat, it will take several months for you to regain your lost strength."

Captain Roger Seymour smiled grimly and closed his eyes. The doctor took out his watch, opened it and looked at it, his fingers again on the patient's wrist.

"I may as well tell you now," he said, closing his watch and returning it to his pocket, "that the *Semiramis* met with an accident last night—an incoming Liverpool vessel ran into her and drove in her side; she has been sent to the dock for repairs."

Seymour languidly opened his eyes and looked at the doctor. The cordial had contained an opiate which was beginning to take effect; his lips moved and he said slowly: "Then—in that case—I—could not have—gone to Bombay."

Then his heavy lids drooped over his tired eyes and he slept, his hopes and disappointments forgotten.

The soft southern breeze, coming from far across the gulf and heavily laden with the exquisite perfume of the *Magnolia fuscata,* swept into the room, rustled the leaves of a book lying open on the table, made the muslin curtains that shaded the four win-

dows slowly wave to and fro as if the fairies were playing behind them, and gently toyed with the hair upon the sick man's brow. Long the physician sat and watched by the sleeper's side, his keen, trained eyes alert to note every change that passed over his features, even to the twitching of an eyelid.

"He sleeps well," he said at last; "if he awakens refreshed he will be quite able to make the journey to-morrow. I will write to my mother by the evening's mail and tell her of our coming."

He crossed the room and sat down by a small table in front of an open window; he searched among the books and magazines until he found a sheet of paper and an envelope. Then, taking his fountain-pen from a silver case in his pocket he proceeded to write the letter.

Doctor Philip Stanley did not follow his profession from necessity, but because he did not care to remain idle. He was, as far as wealth was concerned, one of Fortune's favorites, and right royally had she showered her gifts upon him. His cotton fields were among the most productive to be found in Nature's favorite garden spot, the beautiful sunny South, whose children may live in semi-idleness and comfort if they so will; but how generously does she reward energy and industry! He was the devoted and only son of a widowed mother, who had somewhat spoiled him, as other mothers in a similar position invariably do. He would have been an excellent model for the Greek Apollo; he was more than six feet in height and magnificently propor-

tioned, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh; his eyes were of that rare shade of blue that can be compared to nothing but new, unused steel. His chestnut hair fell in waves upon his broad, intellectual brow, which was extremely fair and smooth; his hands, that had in them the grip and strength of steel, and the lower part of his face, were tanned from exposure to the warm southern sun. His voice was soft, low, and well modulated, an attribute as necessary for a gentleman of education as for a lady. There were no weak lines about his mouth or chin; on the contrary, a physiognomist would have told you that he had unusual strength of character, with a proud, passionate, and compassionate temperament and an inflexible will. Such was Philip Stanley, cotton planter, physician, and capitalist. The Doctor finished his letter and descending the stairs dropped it in the letter box in the lower hall. He walked briskly through the hospital and visited several patients, all of whom became brighter and more cheerful as he approached; the other physicians and nurses gave place to him as to one who had attained the highest place among them.

"It is well for us, Stanley," said the senior physician of the City Hospital when they had left the wards and entered the reception-room—"it is well for us that your private business will not allow you to follow your profession. Why, I believe nine-tenths of the sick, and those who imagine ailments, would insist on having you prescribe for them, in which case the most of us would have to pocket our

Philip, "and I shall, if possible, persuade him to go with me. What do you think of the plan?"

"It is the best thing that can be done for him. By all means get him out of sight and sound of the singing waves as soon as possible."

"I begs pardon fer interruptin' ov yer, Marse Henry," said a voice at the door, "but dere's er sick gentulman down on Saint Francis Street en dey's sont fer yer ter come."

Doctor Drayton frowned and looked impatiently at the porter.

"Do you expect me to answer such a call as that? How am I to find—"

" 'Scuse me, Marse Henry, but here is er note what Bill brought,—he lives wid er white gentulman on Saint Francis Street,—maybe it'll tell yer; en Bill's done come in er kerridge, jest lack de Doctor ain't got no kerridge ov his own," he added in an undertone.

Doctor Drayton took the note, opened and read it, then with a wave of his hand dismissed the porter.

"This is to remind me," he said to Philip, "that the board of health, of which I have the honor of being president, meets this afternoon at three o'clock, and I must leave now if I am to be on time."

"Then the sick gentleman existed only in Tom's vivid imagination," Philip said, and laughed.

"So it seems; there is no mention of one in this note," he answered, taking up his hat and gloves. Bowing pleasantly to Philip he walked out of the

diplomas and go to work. I suppose, however, sick people feel instinctively that the word practising prefixed to physician is correct in five cases out of ten; and I, who have worked in hospitals where all manner of diseases are to be met with, many more years than you have numbered, have no hesitancy in saying that your skill in diagnosing and controlling afflictions is second to none."

Philip flushed deeply as he bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Such words of commendation from one so eminent in the art of healing as Doctor Drayton are exceedingly gratifying," he replied.

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"Too bad," said Doctor Drayton; "his constant longing to return to that ship and be 'rocked in the cradle of the deep' is retarding his recovery. How wonderful is the sea," he continued musingly, "and how weird is the fascination it possesses for its children. Shall they miss it, I wonder, in that world where the sea shall be no more? What do you propose doing with him?" he asked abruptly.

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"So it seems; there is no mention of one in this note," he answered, taking up his hat and gloves. Bowing pleasantly to Philip he walked out of the

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hospital, and entering the waiting carriage was rapidly driven away.

When Philip returned to Captain Seymour's room two hours later he found him awake and eager for the nourishment which the nurse had gone to prepare.

"I am gratified to find you so much better this afternoon, Roger," said Philip, laying his hand affectionately upon Seymour's shoulder. "I think you will be quite able to take a short journey tomorrow."

"I," cried the Captain; "why, you told me this morning—"

"I know," said Philip, interrupting him; "I remember what I told you this morning; but this journey has no connection with your ship. You must be a landsman a few weeks longer. I return home tomorrow and it is the earnest wish of my mother and myself that you accompany me and be our guest while you are recovering from this illness; in fact, we will take no denial."

"Kind, thoughtful, and generous," murmured Seymour. "You have always been like a brother to me, Philip, but I cannot accept so much from even you."

"As what, for instance?" asked Philip, looking steadily into his face.

"Oh," answered Seymour, with the irritableness which sometimes characterizes a convalescent, "you have left your own affairs for four weeks to be with me in this illness and now you would burden your-

self with an invalid for an indefinite time. Do not deem me ungrateful, Philip, but I am already under heavier obligations than I can ever repay."

Philip hesitated before replying. He was determined that his friend should go with him when he returned home; but he did not want Seymour to feel any weight of what he termed "obligations." So he answered somewhat coldly, and with a touch of pride in his voice:

"You wish me to understand that if our positions had been reversed, if you had been the physician with money and time at your command, and I had been the one upon whom fortune had frowned, you would not have come to me?"

"Philip," cried Seymour, in amazement, "what can you mean? I not come to you were you in trouble? Why, you ought to know I would do anything in my power for you, my friend from earliest boyhood."

Philip smiled, well pleased with the result of his coldly-spoken words; he knew that his friend would go with him without further urging. The next afternoon at six o'clock Philip and Captain Seymour, followed by Tom, the porter, left the hospital and were driven to the Union Depot, where they boarded the train.

Tom came on with the luggage, and as he was leaving Philip put a present in his hand which made him smile and bow in a delighted manner; and Tom confided to his friend Bill a short time later that

"young Doctor Stanley wus a fine white gentulman, sho'."

At the moment when the ponderous wheels of the train began to revolve, slowly at first, but gaining speed with each revolution, the full moon, like an immense silver ball, suddenly appeared, coming from a wonderful, unexplored valley in the far-off storied East, and suspended high in the heavens—but ah! by what? Surely not by attraction and gravity alone; for she is ever the bearer of a silent message, a constant reminder of the Supreme Power that rules the universe.

Fast flew the train through the gathering shadows; but faster yet traveled the beautiful Queen of Night. For she, too, had a journey to perform, a certain station to reach, before the sun should rise from out that same unexplored valley in the east to proclaim to all nature that once more the night had passed away and another day had dawned. Onward, ever onward, rushed the train, until warned by the ringing bells that the time to stop at a wayside station had come. Then onward again through the gently-waving shadows cast by the stately forest trees standing like sentinels along the lonely road; then out of the shadows and into the open country flooded with a mellow light, past fields of young cotton drenched with dew; past quiet villages and silent homes over which the spirit of sleep and rest hovered.

And all night long, with never a stop on the way, the unwearied moon, surrounded by the pale, glitter-

ing stars, sleepless, untiring guardians of the night, glided across the face of the heavens, traveling farther and farther into the west until, warned by a crimson glow in the east that the King of Day was approaching, she sank beyond the veil that separates the day from night.

Some fifteen hours after leaving Mobile, Doctor Stanley and his invalid friend arrived in Oakland, one of Alabama's most beautiful cities. They alighted from the train, and entering the open surrey which Mrs. Stanley, Philip's mother, had sent to meet them, they were driven to her home. They left the carriage at the gate, passed along the violet-bordered brick walk and up the portico steps and into the spacious hall, where Mrs. Stanley, a stately, graceful woman, met them, and greeted her son affectionately and gave cordial welcome to Captain Seymour, the son of the dearest friend of her girlhood.

"We will not permit you to remain down-stairs today, Roger, not even to take breakfast with us," said Mrs. Stanley, whose kindness and thoughtfulness never failed. "Sam has orders to take your breakfast to your room; ring for him as soon as you want him."

Seymour thanked her with a grateful look and smile, and as he was somewhat fatigued by his night journey the Doctor conducted him at once to his room and rang the bell. It was answered by Sam, a boy about eighteen years old, whose face was so black it looked as if it had been polished.

"We is all proud to see you home ergin, Marse Philip, en glad to see you too, Marse Roger, dough you is lookin' scandalous thin and porely."

The two friends with difficulty repressed a smile as they thanked Sam for his words of welcome.

"If it is ready, you may bring the Captain's breakfast now, Sam."

"Oh, yas, sir, it's ready. Aunt Tildy's been keepin' it warm a long—I mean it's jest ready now, sir. I'll adjourn to the kitchin and fetch it up; I would refer to view Marse Roger lookin' a little more consequential," he said as he left the room on his errand.

He returned in a few minutes bearing a tray on which was arranged a savory morning meal; he drew from the wall, a small table covered with a snowy linen cloth, and putting the tray upon it gravely stepped behind the Captain's chair and stood watchful and silent.

The thoughtful physician went to the table to see if the breakfast was such as the invalid could safely take.

"Too much for one time, Roger," he said; "I will put aside this honey and coffee and a part of this broiled steak; the remainder of the steak you may have and as much of the milk, eggs, and fruit as you wish."

"I will submit and obey the physician's commands," Seymour replied cheerfully; "even if you leave me nothing but this glass of milk, as I believe you have half a mind to do," he added.

Philip laughed.

"You have read my thoughts correctly," he said. "However, I think you may have something more this morning."

He then left the room and joined his mother at breakfast, which she had ordered to be served later than the usual hour, so her son and his guest could take it with her. They lingered long over the meal, this affectionate mother and her handsome and gifted son, who told her everything connected with his stay at the hospital in Mobile that he thought would interest her.

"Poor Roger," said Philip, in conclusion, "he keenly feels the loss of his property—not so much for himself as on his sister's account; he is making a brave fight; he has a fine situation with the Q. T. Company, which his training at the Naval Academy admirably qualifies him to fill, and he is sure to succeed if he can regain his health."

"I have a pleasant surprise in store for him," said Mrs. Stanley. "Jenny's school closes the first of May and I have invited her to spend her vacation with me. She will be here on the fifth."

"I am glad," said Philip; "her presence will do him more good than all the medicine I can give him. I think he told me he has not seen her since the Q. T. Company sent him to India twelve months ago, and he has been sailing in Eastern waters until his return to his home port the middle of March."

"How quickly one may fall from affluence to comparative poverty," said Mrs. Stanley. "Take Roger

Seymour for an example. He sold his valuable property to invest the money in a place he liked better; he put the purchase money in the bank for a few days while Charley Dalton, his lawyer, was examining deeds and titles. The bank suspended payment and Roger and Jenny were ruined so far as money was concerned. I do not wish to be dissatisfied with your choice of a wife, Philip," said Mrs. Stanley, "but I should have been so much better pleased if you had fallen in love with Jenny Seymour instead of Valerie Lake. You know it has always been one of my most cherished wishes."

"You forget, mother," said Philip, his steel-blue eyes dancing, "that I have never seen Miss Seymour."

"No, I do not forget; but I hoped you would some day make her my daughter. Valerie is so young; her brother does not want her to marry for four years. I am sure she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen; she is like the brilliant, peerless, incomparable red rose, while Jenny is shy and sweet as a white violet, and—I love the violets."

Philip laughed and rose from the table; his mother rang the bell for the servant and together they left the room.

Philip spent the forenoon with his mother, then, after a visit to Captain Seymour, whom he found much improved, he ordered his horse and rode away to inspect the work done on the plantation during his absence. The sun was setting when he rode through the open gateway.

"Now I can see Valerie this evening," he said as he dismounted, and entered the hall. He was met by Sam, who informed him that "Marse Roger weren't nigh so well as he was in the morning."

Philip was vexed. He wanted to see Valerie, but duty to his patient bade him wait. So the lover gave place to the physician and he went up the stairs to Seymour's room.

He found him restless and feverish, but in no danger of a relapse—the only thing in connection with his illness that the Doctor now feared. He rang the bell, which was answered immediately by Sam.

"Go to my room," said Philip, "and bring me the medicine-case you will find on the table."

"Yasser," said Sam as he hurried away. He soon returned, with the case held very carefully in both hands, for Sam, like most of his race, had an exaggerated idea of the importance of the contents of bottles and vials.

"Is dis de little packin'-case you was a requestin', Marse Philip?"

"You were not likely to make a mistake, Sam; this is the only one I have. Pour two spoonfuls of water in that glass and hold it here."

Sam did as he was bidden.

Philip opened the medicine-case and took out a small vial; he carefully measured out a spoonful of its contents and dropped it in the water.

"Drink this, Seymour," he said, taking the glass from Sam and holding it to the Captain's lips.

"You have been sitting up too much to-day; and

I dare say you have been reading, too," he added, as his keen eyes fell upon an open book on the table near by. "You must be careful a few days longer."

"I did read a little this afternoon, but I was feeling so much better I thought it would do me no injury. And I also sat for an hour before sunset by that window which opens to the west overlooking the river," confessed Seymour. "The view was so lovely I was loth to draw the curtain and shut it out."

"You may go, Sam," said Doctor Stanley; "I will ring when your services are required."

Sam bowed and left the room, closing the door softly as he went out.

"And what picture did you see in the west, Roger, that could hold you so long by the open window?"

"Picture?" echoed Seymour. "Oh, I understand you; but you know I have not that vein of romance which enables one to read a story in a beautiful sunset, as Lizzie Hexam read for her brother wonderful stories in the glowing coals. I remember you have a talent in that direction; so paint the picture, read you the story for me."

"The picture in the west," began Philip, to please his friend, "represents the end of the story that had its beginning far back in the East when the day and life were young; when a little child began to journey across the country that lies between the East and West. When the sun was low in the East love and tenderness surrounded him and his way was strewn with happiness. There were no clouds to cast shadows around him, no storms to buffet him. But as the

sun rose higher in the heavens those who had shielded him from every care passed from his sight into a wonderful land beyond the setting sun. And a voice whispered to him to faint not but journey on, though the way was rough and the stones cruelly pierced his feet, and storm-clouds ofttimes arose and dimmed the light of the sun. But while the sun was yet climbing the mountains Love came to cheer him and the way grew smoother. Long they lingered in a beautiful valley where lovely flowers grew around them—friends true and tried, I think those flowers must have been.

"Wealth and fame they gained while they dwelt in the valley, and so happy and contented were they that they would have forgotten the road that lay before them but for the memory of the love that had watched over them when the sun was in the East, a love which drew them on. Then when the sun was descending the mountain a voice whispered to them to arise and journey on; and they obeyed the voice and left the valley where they had been so happy, left friends and fame and wealth and journeyed into that same wonderful land beyond the setting sun, where a life of perfect bliss, far beyond the power of the wildest fancy to imagine, awaited them.

"The sun has set, the picture has faded and the story is closed."

CHAPTER III

IN THE ROSE GARDEN

The next morning Philip Stanley, followed by Sir Colin, his shepherd dog, coal black, save his throat and chest, which were pure white, rode to Lakeview. Uncle Jasper, who was at work among the flowers in the front yard, met him at the gate and took possession of his horse.

"Marse Wilfred is just rid off," he said to Philip, "en all de ladies is in de parlor, 'ceptin' Miss Valerie, en she is in de rose gyarden. Nobody don't offen find Miss Valerie Nowheys else ov er mawnin'."

Uncle Jasper was right. Valerie spent a part of each morning in her rose garden, and when tired of wandering among the shrubs and plants she entered the jasmine-covered summer-house to read, or arrange the gathered flowers. This morning she was seated near the entrance of the little lattice bower, her hands full of crimson roses, and baskets of the same beautiful flowers of so many different colors on the floor at her feet. And above her head hung wreaths of yellow jasmine. She wore a dress of purest white, and very lovely she looked as she sat there among the flowers, her head slightly drooped as she toyed with the roses.

Suddenly she looked up and smiled; she had heard a step approaching, a step she would know among a

thousand! Philip was coming! She arose to meet him, a glad light in her beautiful eyes.

Philip Stanly paused a moment at the door. In after years he remembered with a keen pain at his heart just how she looked that morning; the scattered flowers at her feet, a spray of yellow jasmine blooms touching her glossy black hair, and the roses in her cheeks rivaling those she held in her hands. He was barely conscious of a fleeting wish that Valerie loved him a little less passionately; but the wish, or thought, was gone ere it had taken form, and he came to her and took her hands in his, and raising them to his lips led her to a seat and sat down beside her. Sir Colin, having followed his master, now came in, rested his head a moment on Valerie's lap, then laid down at their feet.

Philip took a small crimson-plush case from his pocket and opened it, disclosing a magnificent opal supported by a slender gold hoop, the one word "Mizpah" engraved in its inner circle.

"For me? ah, how lovely!" exclaimed Valerie as Philip slipped it on her finger.

"Valerie, darling," he said, looking into her shining, velvety-black eyes, his voice low, tender and thrilling, her hands held closely in his, "this opal is our most cherished heirloom; I want you to promise me that you will wear it; that you will not take it from your finger—so long as a tender thought for me remains in your heart. Tradition says it was given to my ancestor, another Philip Stanley, by his friend, the Duke of Richfield, in recognition of his

bravery and humanity on the bloody battle-ground of Hastings the day the youthful King Harold was slain and the Saxons, so long rulers of Britain, were vanquished, and the invading and conquering Normans held the land."

Although it was well known to him, Philip did not think it worth while to tell the following history of the opal which had been handed down through succeeding generations, from father to son, since that memorable fourteenth of October, 1066, to the present time:

In 1189 a great-grandson of the hero of the battle of Hastings joined the Crusaders and marched to Palestine, taking his precious opal, set in the hilt of his sword, with him. He was taken prisoner by the Saracens and kept in captivity many months. Twice he was offered his liberty if he would give up his brilliant opal, but he refused and trusted to the efforts of his friends and comrades to effect his release; but the amount of the ransom was too great to be secured and the crusader was in a fair way to end his days a captive among the unbelieving Turks, when Saladin was told of the Frank prisoner and his wonderfully beautiful jewel that he valued beyond his liberty—a jewel that far exceeded in brilliancy any of the precious stones which gleamed like drops of liquid light in the Soldan's sparkling turban.

At length, when the longing to join his comrades and again bear arms in the cause so dear to every Christian was burning fiercely in his heart, Saladin

commanded the Emir, whose prowess and agility had overthrown the crusader, to bring him to his tent. And one morning, when the sun was rising over the tops of the eastern hills to beat, when the day grew older, with a fierce and almost unbearable heat upon the desert sands, the Emir, with his captive, obeyed the Soldan's command.

The generous and chivalrous Saladin desiring to give the crusader a chance to win his liberty, and also to retain possession of his cherished jewel,—and at the same time to test his courage,—challenged him to meet again the Emir in combat. If the Emir should be defeated the crusader could retain possession of his opal and return to the camp of his comrades. But if the victory were reversed, if the crusader fell again before the lance of the Turk, he would still be at liberty to go whithersoever he would, but his sword, with the jewel in the hilt, he must leave with the victor.

Sir Hugo Stanley joyfully accepted the challenge; he was eager to enter again the field of battle, for men in those days, it would appear, lived to fight and kill each other just as men of later ages, with the same unconquerable, barbarous instinct, ruthlessly kill beautiful song birds, doves and pigeons, and follow and slay defenseless and harmless animals for the cruel pleasure they derive in extinguishing life.

The Saracen and the Frank arrayed themselves for the conflict—for the trial of their skill and endurance—in complete suits of linked, flexible mail,

which protected them from head to foot. They threw themselves lightly upon their prancing steeds, that seemed as ready for the coming battle as their riders.

The heart of the Christian beat fierce and wild with the hope of winning the victory over his Saracen opponent; he thought of his countrymen and comrades in arms gathered around the standard of Richard, the lion-hearted king of England, and the thought gave strength to the hand that held the lance. He sat upon his noble steed almost motionless, as if carved out of stone, waiting the onslaught of the Emir, who, after a moment's hesitation, pushed forward with the intention, apparently, of riding him down, his spear held lightly in his right hand and pointed slightly upward.

The crusader, divining his intention, wheeled aside his noble horse, that responded to the slightest motion of the body as well as touch of the reins, and the Saracen flashed by to return instantly, and each struck his lance full against the shoulder of the other and both rolled to the ground; but so quickly did they regain their feet and spring upon their steeds that neither gained any advantage.

The Saracen then withdrew a short distance, rested his spear on his arm, and taking a small bow, which he carried, began to discharge arrows at his adversary, who was rapidly circling around him in a vain endeavor to pierce him with his lance before he could wheel his horse. But the crusader's attempt failed and he moved off twenty paces, paused

an instant, then touched his fiery steed with his spur, and with leveled lance rushed full against the Saracen.

The shock was so great that horses and riders rolled in the dust; the combatants were stunned, their lances shivered into splinters. The Saracen was the first to recover from the shock, and springing to his feet he stood triumphant over his fallen foeman, who lay with the desert sun shining in his upturned face, motionless, insensible, the crimson blood slowly issuing from a wound in his shoulder, which the point of the Saracen's spear, finding a weak spot in his armor, had pierced.

When the defeated crusader opened his eyes and returned to consciousness he found himself lying on a rug in the Soldan's tent. The physician had bathed and bandaged the wound in his shoulder and he was not otherwise injured. He had made a brave and determined fight, but the laurels of victory had not rested upon him and he acknowledged and accepted his defeat like the true soldier that he was.

His sword, with the glowing opal in the hilt,—the sword which had so often been raised in defense of truth, honor, and justice,—was his no longer; he had permitted no hand but his to touch it; but now, with tightly-compressed lips and firm, steady hand, he held it out to the Emir, who with a few carefully chosen words in praise of the Frank's skill and courage, took it, and with a low obeisance presented it to Saladin, the beloved and honored Soldan and light of the Mohammedan world.

The opal when it left Sir Hugo Stanley's hand was a glowing, brilliant marvel of beauty; but while the Saracen was gazing upon it in silent admiration a change was observed passing over it, as of a cloud shutting out its beauties. It no longer glowed and sparkled, reflecting a thousand different lights, but slowly assumed a dull grayish hue.

"It is a magic stone," said the Emir who had won it from the crusader, his dark, sun-browned face growing pale with a fear which suddenly assailed him—not for himself, but fear that the changing opal might cast an evil spell upon the Soldan, and if he could have done so he would have reclaimed the gift. But that was now impossible and he could only wait and hope that the talisman, for such he judged the opal to be, would regain its wonted lustre.

But day succeeded day and still the dull, grayish hue obscured its wonderful beauty.

Five days after the crusader was defeated by the Emir the wound in his shoulder was healed and he was impatient to rejoin his countrymen and comrades. The noble and chivalrous Saladin appointed four of his warriors to accompany him to the camp of the invading Franks. But before Sir Hugo Stanley mounted his milk-white steed, a gift from the Soldan, to ride away and return no more, Saladin laid in his hand the sword, with the opal in the hilt, which had been the cause of his long imprisonment and final overthrow.

He was deeply affected by this act of generosity,

but he felt that he could not allow the sword lost in a fair fight to be returned to him, and he refused to accept it. Saladin insisted that he should take it from one who regarded him as a friend, and at last he yielded. The brilliant lights flashed into the opal when it touched his hand, and as he rode away with his escort he, unnoticed by them, brushed the tear drops from his eyes.

Such was the history, or legend, of the opal which Philip Stanley placed on Valerie's finger.

"I know you will not break your promise, Valerie, darling; I am waiting to hear you say that you will wear this ring as long as you love me."

"O Philip! then I shall wear it always, for I shall love you while life lasts," said Valerie earnestly, her lips quivering.

Philip was satisfied with the answer of his beautiful betrothed, whom he loved devotedly, but not passionately; he thought he was giving her the deepest, best love of his life, but there were "deeper depths" in his heart that had never been sounded—of this he was blissfully ignorant. The love he felt for Valerie, compared to the love his heart could and one day would awaken to, was "As moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine."

But Valerie, the young and beautiful orphan heiress, loved Philip Stanley with that deep, enduring affection which comes but once in a lifetime and is not transferable from the object that kindles it. Such love is experienced by only a few hearts, and sorrow and disappointment, rather than happiness,

is oftener their portion, especially if pride and jealousy are deeply rooted in the same heart. Time, and time alone, can prove whether or not Valerie possessed those happiness-killing qualities. Her sister-in-law, Eva Lake, told Mrs. Gray that she did not; but wiser women than Eva have been mistaken.

Time passes quickly with those who are happy. As the sun ascended to the highest point in the heavens the shadows, Nature's dial, cast by the trees and shrubs growing around the jasmine-covered bower gradually, imperceptibly grew shorter; noon was approaching and still Philip lingered. He was loth to go; he was light hearted and happy this lovely, capricious April morning; no care rested upon him and he talked and laughed in very exuberance of spirits. Sometimes the happiness of a lifetime is crowded into a few weeks or months.

Never had animate nature seemed in a more joyous mood. Scarlet-throated humming-birds whirred among the flowers and a centipede hurried across the grass. In the topmost branches of a mock-orange tree a mocking-bird, with gracefully moving head and swelling throat, was trilling in a perfect ecstasy of delight, trying to drown the sounds made by Uncle Jasper, who was nailing together a frame to support a climbing rose; and as he worked he gave out, and sung, line by line, one of his quaint songs.

A pale green lizard crept slowly across the threshold, raised its head and surveyed the two young people and the dog lying at their feet, then,

frightened by a movement of Sir Colin, cautiously moved backward and darted away. A butterfly gently moving with the almost imperceptible breeze flitted through the latticed frame and rested a moment on Valerie's shoulder, opening and closing its brilliant, gorgeous wings, more perfect than any work of art.

Philip raised his hand and the butterfly, quick to take alarm, fluttered away.

When he could linger no longer Philip took his hat off the floor and held it in his hand while Valerie gathered up her flowers.

"I want to hear you say again, Valerie, that you will wear this opal ring as long as you love me."

"I promise, Philip," she answered, looking into his steel-blue eyes, the roses deepening in her cheek. "I will wear it until you with your own hands remove it from my finger."

Philip kissed her perfect lips, around which a tender smile hovered.

"And now, Valerie, darling," he said as they walked along the garden path, "give me one of your roses in remembrance of our compact and this happy morning."

She complied, selecting a rose-bud, pure white and perfect of form, exhaling a faint, delicious perfume, and held it out to him.

He took it from her fingers and pinned it in his button-hole.

Then before they reached the veranda steps the

two little boys, Eugene and Bertram, with their companion, Mitts, came from the opposite side of the garden.

"Cousin Philip, Cousin Philip!" Bertie cried in delight, running to meet Doctor Stanley, who evidently was a prime favorite. But Eugene came on with more dignity, and gravely held out his small, waxen hand to Philip, who folded it in one of his and with the other raised the solemn little face and gazed long and keenly into it. What he saw there did not altogether please him, but he made no remark.

"What were you little fellows doing there among the rose bushes," he asked.

"Chasing butterflies and humming-birds; mother says we may if we will not catch the humming-birds nor touch the butterflies and brush the down off their wings," answered Bertie; "it is cruel to do that, you know, Cousin Philip; then they could not fly and Mitts would catch them."

"A sad ending for the gay and brilliant butterflies," said Philip, without the shadow of a smile.

"May I ask you three questions, Cousin Philip?" said Eugene.

Valerie smiled and laid her hand caressingly upon Eugene's golden curls.

"Certainly, Eugene," answered Philip, his eyes dancing, "you may ask me as many questions as you like, though I doubt my ability to answer them."

"I want to know," said Eugene, "why the butterflies could not fly if the down were brushed off their

wings, and why do such little humming-birds have such long bills and forked tongues."

"Upon my word," laughed Philip, "your questions are too hard for me, Eugene. I have forgotten—if I ever knew—that humming-birds have forked tongues. I will have to review my natural history and will give you the benefit of my investigations."

CHAPTER IV

THE DINNER PARTY

Mrs. Gray and her daughters were to leave Lakeview for their home in Marsville on the morrow, and a few friends had been invited to a small dinner party given in their honor. Brilliant lights were flashing from the open windows of the stately home and Japanese lanterns suspended among the branches of the water-oaks on the lawn threw grotesque shadows among the shrubs, but the mellow glow that enveloped the white roses was exquisite as a poet's dream of beauty.

Among a clump of whispering pines growing along the hillside a few hundred yards away the clear, shrill, and musical cry of the whippoorwill awoke the echoes; but at first no bird voice returned the call. Again and again it sent the ringing, penetrating notes far through the darkening woods, and at last, from the banks of a brook winding through the cotton fields beyond the hill came an answering call; then another and another joined in the woodland concert until the pine-clad hillside was throbbing with the melody.

The katydids clinging to the bark of the sweetgum trees, and the crickets, hidden somewhere among the grass, were raising their voices in a glad song to the spirit of the summer night. For sum-

mer, lingering not along the way, arrives early in the Southland.

Lovely, capricious April has departed in a shower of tears, and warm, sunny May will soon join her to sleep in the valley of the past.

Far down the moon-lit road, winding serpent-like through the trees, was heard the rumble of wheels and the rhythmical tread of horses' feet. Judge hastened to the light iron gate standing between the tall, sentinel-like posts at the foot of the lawn, and threw it wide open so the approaching carriages could pass through.

The Reverend Nathan Hatton and his wife were the first to arrive, and closely following them came the Stanleys, with Jenny and Captain Roger Seymour. Soon the fourteen guests were assembled in the elegant drawing-room, where, assisted by Mrs. Gray, Eva Lake, fair and gracious, waited to receive them.

Captain Seymour, who was fast recovering his health, impaired by his long voyage on the Eastern seas, sent a swift and swiftly withdrawn glance around the room; pleasure, followed by pain, a mere shadow of each, mirrored themselves an instant in his eyes, which had rested a moment, without seeming to do so, upon a group a few paces from the door—three fair young girls, Valerie and her two friends, Lily and Dora Gray, standing by a flower-laden table under the chandelier, with its lights falling upon them.

It was not the first time that Roger Seymour had

met them. When his sister Jenny came to Oakland to spend her vacation with Mrs. Stanley, her godmother and friend, the ladies from Lakeview had called to see her; and Captain Seymour, down-stairs for the first time since his arrival in Oakland, was in the parlor with his sister and hostess when the ladies entered the room. And Cupid, who was passing with his bow full of arrows, though blind, was conscious of those around him, and with a cherubic smile on his face let fall an arrow which pierced Seymour's heart.

It is Cupid's privilege to sometimes play wild pranks with hearts, and if he would only leave an ointment to heal the wounds he inflicts, much bittersweet sorrow would be unknown; but this he has never been known to do, and his victims bandage their pierced hearts as best they may, and succeed in healing them so skilfully that a careless observer would never suspect a wound had ever existed. But it is the surface only that has healed; for if that same careless hand should touch the wound the heart will quiver and glow with the pain.

Valerie, dressed in pure white, as she so often was, a yellow rose in her dark hair and queenly of face and figure, was never more lovely than this evening. She wore no jewels, save the opal on her finger, nor did she with her brilliant eyes and radiant smile need them to enhance her beauty.

Soon after the arrival of the latest guest a servant quietly announced dinner, and Wilfred Lake led the way to the dining-room with Mrs. Gray; Mr. Hat-

ton followed with Mrs. Stanley; then came Philip with Mrs. Hatton, and following them came the younger ladies with the escorts assigned to them, and Eva with Captain Seymour closed the gay procession.

When dinner was finished the hostess gave the signal and all arose from the table, and Philip Stanley, anticipating the other gentlemen, held open the door and the ladies passed out and returned to the drawing-room. The gentlemen resumed their places at the table, but the walnuts and wine had but little attraction for at least three of them, and they soon joined the ladies.

The crimson silk curtains that separated the parlor from the music-room were drawn aside, throwing both rooms into one large, elegant apartment.

Dora Gray was at the piano playing an accompaniment, while Lily sang the song that never grows old, that sweetest of love songs, "Annie Laurie."

"Don't you think, Miss Lily," said Mr. Hatton, when the song was finished, "that 'bonnie Annie Laurie' should have rewarded Douglas's tender love for her by marrying him instead of Furgerson? It is painful to contemplate that the author of those beautiful lines, vibrating with love and tenderness, was not made happy by the lady who inspired them."

"If she loved Furgerson best," answered Lily, after a slight hesitation, "there would have been no possible happiness for either Douglas or herself had she married him."

Mr. Hatton smiled.

"Poor Douglas," he said, and he looked into Seymour's face.

"Do you wish us to understand, Miss Gray," said Captain Seymour, who was standing by her side, "that the fair Annie Laurie did right to ignore the promise true given to Douglas when 'Maxwelton Braes were bonnie'?"

His tone was half-banter, half-serious, and a note of suppressed interest crept into his voice.

Several of the guests, among them the young lawyer, Charley Dalton, now joined the group around the piano.

"What question is being so earnestly discussed," some one asked. Mr. Hatton explained.

"The heroine of the song," said Wilfred Lake, "found that she loved another better than her betrothed, and taking advantage of woman's special privilege, changed her mind and married his rival. This young lady," he added, turning to Lily, "will tell us if other maidens similarly situated would do well to follow her example."

"Truth and honor," answered Lily, "should under all circumstances be considered before one's happiness; a promise once given, whether it concerns the most important or the most trivial affairs of life, cannot be retracted without leaving a blot on one's honor."

"Concise and explicit," said Mr. Hatton, well pleased with the answer; "the whole truth in a small compass."

But Seymour winced and Charley Dalton changed color, though neither could have told why.

The discussion was closed and they gave their attention once more to the music, which now changed from lovely Scottish songs to more recent and operatic selections.

How easily and quickly the current of one's life may be changed from a smooth stream that glides through happy and sunshiny ways to a foaming torrent that sweeps peace and love and happiness away.

Valerie carried a fan of white ostrich tips attached to a slender gold chain which she wore around her throat; she held the fan in her right hand, opening and closing it as she talked to Jenny Seymour and Mrs. Gray. Doctor Stanley joined them, a volume of exquisite engravings in his hand which his mother wished him to show to Jenny. Valerie turned as he approached, and in some unaccountable way the book caught in her gold chain. The slender links, weakened by long and constant use, parted, the fan fell to the floor and the ivory sticks were broken.

Philip picked up the broken fan, but instead of placing it in Valerie's outstretched hand he slipped it into his pocket.

"Can you ever forgive my carelessness?" he asked in a voice that only Valerie heard.

"The fault was mine," she answered, and smiled.

And although his lips uttered no other words of apology for the accident, his eyes spoke volumes.

Philip drew a polished rosewood stand under a

chandelier, and laying the book of engravings upon it, turned the leaves while Jenny looked at the beautiful pictures.

Valerie, with the broken chain in her hand, left the parlor unobserved, and went up-stairs to her room to get another fan. She dropped the broken chain in a jewel box, and opening a drawer of the dressing-table took out a small silk fan, pure white save for a cluster of exquisite hand-painted blue violets and pale green leaves.

She descended the stairs with the intention of returning to the drawing-room before her absence was noticed; but obeying a sudden impulse she passed the wide-open doors, and down the long hall, and stepped out upon the broad veranda. She stood by one of the massive pillars, around which climbed a Gloire de Dijon rose in full bloom. The evening air was heavy with delicious perfumes; the moonlight streamed through the rose leaves and lay upon the floor at her feet like mammoth designs of wonderful, changing lace-work. A mocking-bird perched on the top of the gate-post, and deluded by the lights among the trees into the belief that the sun was still shining, was singing his inimitable song; the whippoorwills scattered among the trees on the hillside were calling as they had called earlier in the evening. A swarm of fireflies, like tiny falling stars, darted among the distant pines, and a small circle of pale light beneath a tuft of withered grass told where a glow worm was hiding.

Valerie was an ardent admirer of nature in all its

varying forms. She stood now, gazing upon the beauties around her, trying vainly to understand the message that is ever whispered by the spirit of morning, of noontide, and the waning evening. For there is a voice that whispers a message to each and every one—a voice and message so fleeting and elusive, but always and forever present, and yet just beyond the grasp of the mind and heart.

Sounds of music floated through the open windows and down the long veranda and seemed to linger around the spot where Valerie stood.

"How beautifully Dora sings," she thought; "I must go back to the drawing-room; I have been away too long."

She left the shadowy, moonlit veranda to return to their guests, when her steps were arrested by voices near by. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Hatton were passing an open window a few feet from where Valerie stood.

"It is quite true," Mrs. Gray was saying in a low but perfectly distinct voice, which reached Valerie's ears—"it is quite true that Mrs. Stanley wishes her son to break off his engagement with Valerie Lake and marry Jenny Seymour, who is a special favorite of hers; and it seems to me Doctor Stanley is yielding to her wishes. I notice he has been very attentive to Miss Seymour all the evening—"

Valerie heard no more, and they passed on, leaving a thorn with poison on its sharp point to bury itself deep in her heart.

She had been tenderly shielded and cared for all

her short life, and was in many respects still a child, and loved and trusted her friends with childlike simplicity and fidelity; she was the soul of truth and honor, and lived in a world and atmosphere ideal, and to such a one the awakening brings pain and sorrow. For a moment she believed the words she had heard. What object could Mrs. Gray, a lady admired and respected, have in making such an assertion if it were not true? It never occurred to her that many well-meaning persons delight to interfere in the affairs of their friends and sometimes say things in one's absence that they would hesitate to utter if one were present.

With head erect and glowing cheeks she walked on and met Doctor Stanley at the hall door. He had come in search of her; he had been asked to sing, but declared that he could not unless Valerie would play the accompaniments for him, which was only an excuse, as he was an accomplished musician, but he did not care to sing unless Valerie were present. So he went in search of her.

"Valerie, darling," he said, "I have come for you."

She looked into his steel-blue eyes and her doubts vanished. Would they ever come again?

They crossed the room together and she sat down in front of the piano and ran her fingers lightly over the ivory keys, and they answered the touch in a voice laden with thrilling melody.

Philip sang the song selected for him, and when it was finished Valerie rose from the piano, but smiled and resumed her seat when another piece of music

was placed before her. But Philip put it aside, and sang instead a song that breathes a devotion which knows no change, that sweet old song,

"O, my luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O, my luve's like the melodie,
That's sweetly played in tune.

"As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

"Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

"And fare thee weel, my only luve!
And fare thee weel a-while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile."

CHAPTER V

THE MORNING RIDE.

"Philip Stanley arose from the breakfast table, and selecting a cluster of white oxalis buds from the vase in the center of the table, he fastened it in his button-hole.

"Will you go with me through the cotton fields, Roger?" he asked. "It is an ideal morning for riding, and I must go, as Sam tells me I am wanted to settle a slight difference between two of the tenants, brothers, who have been working together until yesterday, when they had a disagreement and came to blows; each accuses the other of idleness and both declare they can no longer work 'through and through.' You will come?"

Seymour assented and they left the room, and with Sir Colin racing on before them, went to the stables, as was Doctor Stanley's invariable custom. He was an enthusiastic lover of horses; his stable comprised some beautiful and valuable animals, and although his groom was efficient and experienced he never omitted, when at home, a daily visit of inspection. His favorite among the saddle horses was Stella, a queen of beauty, glossy black save for a white star in her forehead. She whinnied when Philip approached, and reaching out her soft muzzle rubbed him affectionately upon the shoulder.

Her master stroked her gracefully arched neck as he talked to her; then the occupants of the other stalls claimed his attention, and he gave a word and kindly touch to each as he passed among them, explaining to Seymour, who walked by his side, the distinguishing traits of character of his pets.

"Have you noticed anything peculiar about the features of this horse?" he asked, stopping in front of a slender-limbed, lightly-built bay.

Seymour, a better judge of a ship than of the merits of a horse, looked at him critically; ran his fingers through the scanty, silky mane; passed his hands along the small pointed ears and up and down his face.

"I have been riding him every day for three weeks," he answered, when his examination was finished, "and I see nothing peculiar about him. What is it?"

"Look at his nose," Philip said.

And Seymour looked at his nose, taking the horse, which regarded him with wondering but intelligent eyes, by the head-stall and turning his face so he could get a better view of it.

"The hair is somewhat lighter in color," he said when his survey was finished; "but that is nothing unusual. Many horses much darker have perfectly white noses."

Philip laughed.

"The difference is not in color, but in form," he said; "look between his eyes and his nose."

Seymour, as much amused as Philip, again examined the horse's face as desired.

"The form of his face is the same as Stella's," he said at last; "there is no difference."

"Oh, but there is," answered Philip.

"Well, I give it up," returned Seymour. "Wherein lies the difference?"

"It is here," answered Philip, laying his fingers just below the eyes and above the nostrils. "This part of his face," he continued, "is more prominent than that of any other horse in the stable. As you will see, Prince Rupert has a Roman nose."

"A Roman nose!" exclaimed Seymour. "Why, I never heard of such a thing as a horse having a Roman nose. Of course, I see this prominence since you have called my attention to it, though I must confess I would not have done so otherwise. Is it a mark of inferiority?"

"Oh, no," answered Philip; "in point of fleetness and endurance he is one of the best in the stable; in fact, he is second only to Stella."

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, animals, especially horses and dogs, comprehend more than the majority of masters give them credit for when they are the subjects of remark.

Prince Rupert stood quietly in his stall, in a listening attitude while his features were being discussed, a blade of fodder held loosly between his lips, his small ears pointed forward and one fore foot slightly in advance of the other as if a step had been arrested.

When the two left the stall he turned to the manger and in a thoughtful mood finished his breakfast.

"Have the horses at the door in half an hour, Uncle Sophocles," Philip said to the white-haired groom, who arose from his seat under a china tree, and coming forward stood with his hat in his hand to receive directions for the morning.

"I will hev 'm on time to a minute, sir," the namesake of the celebrated Athenian answered as he bowed low; "I don't never keep my gentlemun waitin'. There's one t'ing I wants ter call yer 'tention ter dis mawnin', Marse Philip," he said; "that ole sorrel mule w'at you tole me ter feed up en get in better condition don't 'spond ter de treatment; he is 'stroyin' lots ov feed w'at might be put ter better use; he won' never be wuth de fodder w'at he eats, let 'lone de corn en oats. Hev I got yore commission ter tu'n 'im out en let 'im pick up w'at he kin? He's got ter carry too many years on his back ter ever do wuck 'nough ter yern his boa'd."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Philip. "What, turn a faithful old servitor out to half starve when his days of usefulness are past! You will continue to give him your best attention and a good stall and plenty of feed and water every day. Old age is extremely likely to overtake every one who lives long enough, man as well as beast.

"Dat's de trufe, sir; dat sho' is de trufe," said the groom; "Ole Jerry shall be 'tended to.

"I knowed he wouldn't tu'n him out," he muttered

to himself. "I jest wanted de Captain to hyah w'at he would say. Ole Jerry ain't wuth nothin'; he won' even do ter plow de 'tater patch, but I'll do my bes' wid 'im. I well 'members de time w'en he wus a mighty likely young mule."

Before Philip left the house he put a small sack of smoking-tobacco in his pocket, which he now gave to Uncle Sophocles, who received it with delight; his chief weakness was for tobacco, which he used on every available occasion, though he always remembered orders and never smoked in the vicinity of the stables.

" 'Some there be who mus' serve en some mus' be served,' " this white-haired groom was wont to remark to his faithful wife, Aunt Tildy, "en fer my part I'm proud ter do de servin'. I al'ays do my best en de king nor de Pres'dent can't do no more dan dere bes'. Dey gits honors in one way en I gits 'em in anodder; we is all in de place w'at suits us bes'. Dat's de way I looks at t'ings."

Who can say that the old negro's view was not correct?

A roadway thickly hedged with Cherokee roses, now a mass of pale pink blooms, led from the grounds surrounding the Stanley home to the cotton fields, which extended away from the city in the direction of the river.

Philip and Captain Seymour were riding down this road on their way to the cotton fields, when they heard the sharp barking of a dog on the other side of the hedge and a rabbit, weary and wild-eyed, its

strength almost spent, hopped into the lane a hundred feet in front of the riders; as it stopped a moment to gather strength for the final run, its eyes, large and terror-stricken, turned to them as if appealing for help.

Sir Colin, with raised ears and bristling mane, sprang toward it, but instantly obeyed his master's command to come back; and the rabbit, alarmed, crossed the road and disappeared under the rose hedge, where it was safely hidden from the dog and two little negroes who quickly followed it.

Philip brought Stella to a stand.

"Don't hunt rabbits so near the house," he said to the boys, who had stopped in the middle of the road when they saw Doctor Stanley and his companion.

"Nosser, us never do," they cried together, "us al'ays 'members w'at yer done tole eve'ybody en us don't hunt hyer. De dawg jump dat rabbit 'way down yonner mos' ter de ribber, en he done run dis er way; we jest come on up hyer ter see ef we kin git 'em ter mek er pie fer grammer's dinner. 'Peared lack he wus mos' run down."

"Dar he is unner dat fick vine, layin' ra't close ter de groun'!" Jake excitedly exclaimed, as his ferret-like eyes found the little animal.

"Please, sir, Marse Philip, kin us poke 'im out fer grammer?"

Philip looked at the black faces turned appealingly to him, and he saw the eager light in the eyes shining from beneath the brims of ragged straw hats. Even the dog, sitting upright in the dusty road, turned its

head on one side and seemed to wait for the next words to come from the lips of this lord of the land, who had the power to send them, boys and dog, drooping and dispirited to their homes in the quarter; or else allow them to continue the chase of the rabbit, than which nothing gives more pleasure to little Southern negroes. All this Philip saw, but he also saw from his seat on Stella's back the rabbit, foot-sore and weary, hiding beneath the rose hedge, its eyes turned to him, and—

"Let the rabbit alone," he said; "do not chase it any more."

"Yasser," answered Mose in a dejected tone, moving his bare feet in the hot sand. The dog, too, changed his position and drooped his ears. A moment the three stood irresolute, then turned away.

Philip's eyes were twinkling. He put his fingers in his pocket and took out a small coin.

"Here," he said, "take this and get something else for your dinner."

Jake and Mose bounded forward, but came to a sudden halt as Stella, impatient at the delay, raised one fore foot and pawed the ground.

"Thanky, Marse Philip; please drap it on de groun', sir; Stella mout step on we ef we gits enny closter."

"Come to the house at three o'clock and bring that dog with you," said Philip, brushing a fly off Stella's ear.

"Now, I wonder what you want with them," said Seymour as they rode off.

Philip smiled, but made no reply to the remark.

"We will ride through the cotton fields first," he said; "I am wanted down here, as I told you this morning; when that little affair is disposed of we will take the road that leads along the river bank and go as far as the landing. For those who can see beauty out of an artist's studio there is one exceedingly beautiful picture beginning at the margin of the river and rising gradually as it sweeps away into the distance, until earth and sky seem to meet and blend."

Meanwhile, as the friends rode on, the two little negroes, Jake and Mose, stood in the road in a cloud of dust raised by the horses' feet, and watched them out of sight.

"It's bad luck ter watch ennybody clean out'n sight, Mose. Le's run yonner en clam' on de fence so us kin see 'em ergin, den tu'n roun' 'fore dey gits beyan' de ben' in de road."

And they did. The dog, too, climbed the fence; but finding some difficulty in standing on the narrow rails, jumped down again.

"It would be mos' er pity fer enny bad luck ter git ter Marse Philip, wouldn' it, Mose?" remarked Jake as he rubbed the shining present between his hands.

"Dat it would," said Mose; "it sho' would. Marse Philip is er gentulman right; dough dey wus er time dis mawnin' w'en he tole we not ter ketch dat rabbit dat I feared he warn't. W'at cher reckon he want wif we en Brag ter come ter de house fer, Jake?"

"Us'll hatter wait en fin' out," answered Jake. "I'll tell yer w'at, sir, wouldn' it be fine ef he want us ter stay in de house lack Sam do. Den he'd be us marster en us wouldn' never be hongry en us could git some med'cine fer grammer en she wouldn't hatter pay fer it. Lawsy mussy!" he suddenly exclaimed, "we done fergit ter tell Marse Philip w'at grammer done sont us atter. Hit's too late now. Less come round yonner en see ef dat rabbit's done gone; but don't ye tetch 'im."

"Don't tech 'im yerse'f!" was the indignant retort; "I ain't er gwine ter."

They quietly approached the break in the rose hedge where the rabbit lay hiding, and dropped on the ground and looked under the vines.

"Yonner he, Jake," whispered Mose; "'way up yonner by dat broken rail. See 'im?"

And Mose and Jake laid down in the dust with the dog sitting upright by them, and looked at the forbidden rabbit, and the rabbit stared at them.

The minutes lengthened into hours. The sun drew nearer and nearer, then passed the line overhead, and still the six eyes watched the animal. At last four eyes closed and the boys slept. The dog, tiring of the watch alone, sought a shady place under the edge of the vine and laid down.

Then the rabbit left the sheltering hedge and ran with all speed to its home in the river swamp.

It was now the middle of June and the cotton fields, seas of waving green leaves, stretching away in the distance, were dotted with thousands of

blooms. Some—those that opened to-day—were pure white, and equally as many—those of yesterday—a beautiful pink.

Beyond the cotton fields, and stretching down to the river, were the corn fields, the top of each dark green plant crowned with a white tassel, and along the jointed stalks pink and white silk-tipped shoots, —embryo ears of golden grain,—no larger than a pencil, forced their way into the light and were warmed and nourished by the genial summer sun into magic development. And each day as they grew in size and strength they listened to the whispering of the wind among the slender sword-like leaves.

And in a hollow log outside the field nearest the river lived a gray possum, quiet, bright-eyed and watchful, waiting for the growing corn.

"Who have we here," said Seymour, as they came upon one of the plantation hands standing under a low-spreading cypress tree, with his hoe across his shoulder, apparently waiting for them to come up.

"The very man I have come to see," said Philip, as he stopped his horse in the shade. They had left the fields and were approaching the higher grounds where the quarters or homes of the negroes were situated.

"Well, George," said Doctor Stanley, "what was the matter with you and Jack this morning?"

George stepped forward, moved the hoe from his shoulder, and standing it upright on the ground leaned upon the smooth poplar handle. He raised his hand and placing his thumb and middle finger

on his forehead, thus shading his eyes from the rays of the sun, he looked down the lane, which led to a house a quarter of a mile away.

"Yonner comes Jack now, lopin' dat mule," he said, dropping his hand from his eyes and clasping it around the handle of the hoe. "I'm gwine ter tell yer de trufe, Marse Philip, 'fore he gits yere. I'll say dis erbout Jack—dough he is my brother, he's jest es full of whimses es er bumble-bee w'at tries ter git honey out'n er jimsonweed."

"I can understand that," said Philip smiling, "and you need not enumerate his idiosyncrasies. What do you want with me this morning? Be brief if you can, I have no time to waste."

"Dat's de trufe, Marse Philip; dere ain' no time ter was'e, w'ich wus de 'casion o' de trubble 'twixt me en Jack. I won't 'numerate he sins, but I'll jest tell yer 'nough erbout it so yer kin git a unner-stan'in' ov de sitavation. Den I hopes you'll lay off my lan'. I can't wuck t'rough en t'rough no longer. I'll pay my part ov de rent en Jack kin pay his'n.

"Yistiddy wus Monday, yer know, Marse Philip, en ter tell yer de trufe I didn' feel lack hoein' cotton rapid. I went ter de feas' in de wilderness Sad'day night en didn't git much res' 'fore day. En Sunday en Sunday night I had ter go ter hear de elder 'zort. Jack he went, too, but he had de 'vantage ov me 'cause he rid de mule what has ter plow all de week —en he kep' 'im tied ter er saplin' mos' all night; consekently he wer'n't tired es me."

Philip, knowing an attempt to shorten George's

recital of his grievance would be futile, drew his horse farther under the drooping branches of the cypress and into the welcome shade.

The morning was extremely warm even for an Alabama June day.

George took a much-abused plaid handkerchief from the crown of his hat and wiped the moisture from his face; then holding it by one corner he clasped his hand again around the hoe handle, and the handkerchief floated like a flag on the breeze.

Only those whose youth has been spent in the South can understand the conditions existing between the young master and the negroes of his plantation, who are in so many ways helpless and dependent, notwithstanding their independence.

"En Monday mornin', es I done tole yer, Marse Philip," resumed George, "I didn' feel lack hoein' dat cotton rapid en I never 'teged myse'f gittin' ter de field early. Jack wus late, too. Dere wer'n't no rows hoed fer 'im ter plow en he had ter tie de mule in de fence cornder en he'p de hoe hands erwhile; en Jack scorns ter hoe, 'cause it's more worrysome dan holdin' de plow han'les en lettin' de mule do de wuck. He is suttenly er triflin' darky on 'casions." And George emphasized his words by digging his hoe vigorously into the grass at his feet.

"Atter erwhile I tole Jack I would do de plowin' en let 'im lead de hoe hands twell de crop wus laid by—I wus tired ov dat job. But, Marse Philip, ef yer'll be'l'eve me," said George, excitedly waving his handkerchief, "he got es mad es er pizen-snake

en wouldn't resent ter de preposition, en hit me en I hit 'im, en I ain't er gwine ter wuck under Jack no longer. So please, sir, come on over yonner en gim-me my lan'. I'm er was'in' time; I may be triflin', but I ain't es triflin' es Jack."

And George led the way across the spring branch and through a narrow strip of woods where in the early morning,

> "Dew drops hung like jewels,
> On the tips of pale green leaves,
> To fall upon the violets blue
> With the coming of the breeze."

Then through a grove of giant white-oak and moss-draped cypress trees. Past Jack's water melon and potato patches, around the fence which enclosed the fast-ripening oats, and into the cotton field where Jack awaited them.

He had slipped the bridle bit out of the mule's mouth and tied the plow line around one fore foot and left him to graze along the edge of the field where the grass grew luxuriantly.

"I ain't got nothin' ter tell yer, Marse Philip," said Jack, "en I ain't got no 'plaint ter make 'ceptin' I can't wuck no longer wid George; he's too triflin' en full ov anticks. The idee," he exclaimed indignantly, "ov wantin' me ter give up de plowin' en go ter hoein'; me w'at's been holdin' de plow ever sence I had ter stan' up stret en stiff ter retch de han'les! George knows I ain't no idle pusson, dat is, idle lack he kin be on some pacific 'casions. All I wants now

is fer yer ter gimme my lan'. I knows yer'll do me jestice en give George his jews, too. En don' yer have no oneasiness erbout de rent, Marse Philip; it's a comin', I promise dat."

And Doctor Stanley divided the growing crop to the entire satisfaction of George and Jack, although it would have been utterly impossible for them to have done the same for themselves. They had implicit confidence in his wisdom and judgment; and when he left them they were working together in the best of humor, their resentment against each other having vanished.

Doctor Stanley and Roger Seymour left the plantation road and entered the highway and rode leisurely in the direction of the river, where a line of blue-black smoke was curling upward.

"That smoke is coming from the chimney of a passing boat," said Philip.

A few yards farther on they passed a bend in the road and came in full view of the river a half mile away. And passing rapidly along its gliding surface was a beautiful, graceful floating palace.

"What sad or joyous hearts; what hopes and fears she shelters we can only conjecture," said Philip reflectively. "Some, perhaps, will pass this way no more, but onward and outward to mingle with the great world. How smoothly and silently the river flows. Not a murmur nor a ripple disturbs its surface as it glides on to the ocean. Quiet and tranquil to-day like our lives; to-morrow, it may be, the

storm clouds will arise and the fierce winds lash the waters into foaming waves."

"Don't talk in that vein, Philip," said Seymour; "you make me feel as if a cloud were about to descend upon me." And his thoughts went back to the evening of the dinner party at Lakeview, and he saw again a fair young girl standing under the chandelier with its light falling full upon her.

Philip looked at him in some surprise as he noted the slight flush that overspread his face.

"If there are any clouds in your sky and mine," he said with a smile, "they are too small to be seen."

"I hope," said Seymour, "any cloud that falls on me may not cast shadows on the paths and in the lives of my friends."

They rode on some minutes in silence. Philip was puzzled by Seymour's words. He had noticed a growing restlessness in his friend and attributed it to his impatience to return to his ship and once more engage in the active pursuits of life.

"A sailor," thought Philip, "be he captain or stoker, is never long content to remain on land. The sea calls him and he obeys her voice. But this is something more than love for the *Semiramis,* and I mean to find what it is."

"There," said Doctor Stanley, as they came to a high white bluff rising many feet above the water—"there is the lovely view I promised to show you."

It was in truth a beautiful picture upon which their eyes rested—a picture fresh from the hand of the All-wise Ruler of the universe and more grand and

impressive than the skill of man had ever transferred to canvas. For what work of art ever yet equaled the works of nature with their ever-changing scenes.

Far below them flowed the river, deep and silent, its many secrets untold, unknown; and the ripples left by the passing boat widened from shore to shore. The sunshine glinting upon its uneven surface seemed broken into thousands of dazzling reflections.

On the opposite side of the river was a vast and beautiful plain stretching away in the distance as far as the eye could reach; on one side of it grew cedar, oak, and cypress trees, stately and magnificent monarchs of the forest. On the other and eastern side rose hills of varying heights and around their tops hung the pale blue mist-like smoke from the distant city. Still farther away, at a point where trees and hills, earth and sky seemed to meet, the tall spires of a city lifted their heads and pierced the apparently descending clouds.

It was a beautiful picture, and Philip, who had the soul of a poet, gazed long at it, enraptured.

"I love it," he said at last, "more for the thoughts it suggests than for anything else. I do not see how any one, no matter how worldly, can stand here and not feel in his heart how sublime and wonderful are the works of nature."

"Although but a plain," said Seymour, "a plain walled in by trees and hills, with a city in the distance. What are the thoughts suggested? I sometimes find it difficult to follow your flights of fancy."

"It is a panorama of life," answered Philip. "Im-

agine that plain the field where the battle of life is fought; on either side of the path which runs through the center to the city are dark shadows—sorrows, perhaps—shutting out the light of the sun. The hills represent difficulties, trials and tribulations to be met and overcome if one leaves the straight path; and in the distance and ever beckoning onward is the city, the Refuge, the Home which all are striving to reach."

"I see," said Seymour, as they turned their horses in the direction from which they had come. When they were nearing Oakland they overtook a horseman riding leisurely along the dusty road and followed by a brown and white setter. He had evidently been hunting, and the well-filled game bag fastened to his saddle testified to his success.

"I am sure that is Charley Dalton," said Seymour when they first came in sight of the hunter; "I will call to him to stop for us."

He put his fingers to his lips and whistled.

The handsome young lawyer turned at the first sound and waited for them to come up, and they finished the ride together.

"Now I wonder," thought Seymour, "what Dalton wants with that bag of game; he has no home, save such as is found in a boarding-house where he gets his meals and the office where his days are spent. Not my ideal of home by any means."

And in fancy he pictured the home where the girl he had learned to love awaited his coming with a smile and tender welcome; and when he walked the

deck of his ship that rode the turbulent waters like a thing of life, her prayers for his safe return followed him.

"I must leave here to-morrow," he thought, as they dismounted and gave their horses in charge of Sam, who was waiting for them.

Charley Dalton glanced at his hunting-suit and declined Philip's invitation to come in. He beckoned to Sam and gave him the bag of game.

"For your mistress, with my compliments," he said, and rode away to his office in the business part of the city.

"Please step dis way a minit, Marse Philip," said Sam, as he led Stella and Prince Rupert to the stable-yard.

"You needn't follow no furder dan de wood pile; I wants to show you somethin'."

Seymour entered the house, and Philip, in some surprise, went with Sam.

He laughed when he saw the two little negroes, Jake and Mose, sitting on the wood in the sunshine, with the lean, sharp-nosed dog lying by them.

"You see 'em, don't you, Marse Philip?" said Sam, pointing a finger at them. "They have been a-settin' there advancin' two hours, and they have the imperdence to say you tole 'em to come here and wait for you. Missis done give 'em the physic what you repaired for their grammer and tole 'em to take it to her,—it seems her restitution is wuss,—but they won't go. And I done tole 'em if they wouldn't go home, ter cut some wood, they could have filled

the wood-box in this time; but they ain't got no respect for my commands. I guess they'll move now!"

"It is all right," said Philip. "When you have given the horses to Sophocles take these boys to the kitchen and give them and the dog as much dinner as they can eat and tell the cook to put something in a basket for their grandmother."

"Jest as you say, sir," answered Sam, as he went on with the horses. "I'll hatter tell Miss 'bout that basket," he thought; "I know from 'sperience Aunt Tildy won't know what to fix."

When Philip returned to the house Seymour was standing by the hall table with a telegram in his hand.

"From the Q. T. Company," he said, handing it to Philip. "I am ordered to take the *Semiramis* to Liverpool without delay and there await further orders."

CHAPTER VI

A SHADOW

"And when do you leave here?" asked Doctor Stanley, when he had read the telegram.

"This evening by the seven o'clock train," answered Seymour. "My orders, as you will see, are imperative, and I must join the ship at once."

"You will remember," said Philip gravely, "that I told you when you were in the hospital in Mobile that you required a rest of at least three months to fully regain your health. That was only eight weeks ago. Do you not feel that you are taking a great risk by going to work so soon after your very serious illness?"

Seymour was silent a few minutes.

"No, Philip," he said at length, "work is the very thing I need just now; and you know I am not to go immediately to India, where I contracted that fever. I dare say I will be back in Mobile by the last of July. I know the Q. T. Company expect me to leave Mobile for Bombay the first of September and it will take at least three weeks to load the *Semiramis* for the voyage."

He looked at Doctor Stanley's serious face and smiled.

"Philip, my friend," he said, his voice as tender as a woman's, "I am glad the work has come now.

My chief regret is that I am not ordered to the North Pole."

"Ah!" exclaimed Philip, "only a woman can make you feel like saying that! There is no time now, but after dinner you will tell me all about it."

Seymour writhed and shook his head.

"You cannot help me," he said, his face flushing; "the case is hopeless."

"What! so bad as that," said Philip. "Then I can give you my sympathy and advice, and possibly suggest a cure; apparently hopeless cases have been cured before to-day."

They hung their white straw hats on the gold-tipped branching antlers in the hall and went into the parlor, where Mrs. Stanley sat alone, busily engaged with a piece of embroidery. She looked up with a smile when they entered the room.

"I was beginning to think that you two boys had forgotten the dinner hour," she said. "You will have barely time to change your dress before the bell rings."

"We have indeed been loitering," said Philip, glancing at the clock on the mantel; "come, Roger."

And they left the parlor and went up the stairs to their rooms on the second floor.

"Where is Miss Seymour, mother?" asked Philip when they met in the dining-room a half hour later.

"Valerie Lake and the two little boys called for her this morning and they carried her off to spend the day at Lakeview. Roger and you can go over in the evening and bring her home."

And then Seymour told of his intended departure at seven o'clock.

"So you see, my dear Mrs. Stanley, there will be no time for me to go, and I must leave a message for her with you."

"That will not do," said Mrs. Stanley with decision. "Jenny would never forgive me if I let you run away even for a few weeks without letting her know. Philip will go and bring her home immediately after dinner."

Seymour thanked her for her thoughtfulness, and one hour later Doctor Stanley stepped into the phaeton at the wide open gate, shook the lines over the backs of the spirited grays, and was soon out of sight down the road.

When he reached Lakeview, Uncle Jasper, who was slow and ageing, and who spent most of his time in the yard, was cutting the fading roses from the bushes. The trimming shears dropped from his hand when he turned to see who was coming down the lane. They fell upon the ground, the sharp points sticking in the mellow soil at the roots of a climbing rose, where they stood up straight.

"Dar now!" he said, "somebody's er comin'; de signs has been er pintin' it all day, en ef my eyes don't 'ceive me dar's Marse Philip er comin' here now."

He hastened to the gate—he was nearly always on time at the gate—and opened it, and Doctor Stanley drove through and stopped his horses under an immense water-oak.

"Marse Wilfred en Miss Eva is gone ter Oakland," said Uncle Jasper, as he took charge of the horses, "en de young ladies wid de chillun en Sis Patty is summers erbout de rose garden er de leetle lake er feedin' de fishes."

"I will find them," answered Philip; "you need not take the horses from the phaeton; I will return in a few minutes."

He passed through the front yard and through the rose garden, now bending beneath thousands of exquisite blooms, and to the door of the rose and jasmine-clad summer-house, where so many happy moments of the past three months had been spent. Only a few blooms of yellow jasmine were now to be seen half hidden among the riotous growth of the roses. The absence of Valerie in that favored spot where the evening shadows were gathering gave Philip an uncomfortable feeling and he turned away. As he did so his glance rested upon a glove lying on the step at his feet. He stooped to pick it up, but Sir Colin, who, unknown to Philip, had followed him, sprang forward and snatched it in his teeth, and for once disobeying his master's voice, ran with it to Valerie and laid it in her hand.

"Good dog!" she said, patting his head. And Sir Colin, to show his appreciation of her words, raced in a circle around them, then rolled over and over on the grass.

The hyacinths growing at the margin of the water were in bloom. The long spikes of blue flowers were held high above the balloon-like leaves floating on

the water. A very small boat with white sails rode at anchor by the imaginary wharf.

This miniature lake, with its flowers, boats and gold fish, was a source of never-ending delight to Eugene and Bertram, who came every evening in charge of their black mammy with a basket of crumbs for the fish. And sometimes the largest fish in the enclosure would come to the surface and eat from their fingers.

"We knew you were coming, Cousin Philip," said Bertram, when Doctor Stanley joined the group around the lake. "We always know you are coming when we see Sir Colin."

Philip laughed.

"You are a very observant little boy," he said.

"Observant—observant," repeated Eugene slowly; "what does that mean, Mammy?" he asked in a whisper, coming to his mammy's side. "Is there anything the matter with Bertie?"

"No, honey; no! It don't mean nothin' pacific; it's jest one ov Marse Philip's wuds what he learnt on some ov his travelin' to en fro, en he uses it w'en he wants ter be mysterfyin'. Dat's all. Now don't talk w'en dere's grown folks by. You en Bertie come on long ov me; you mus'n't stay here twell de sun goes down. De jew ain't good fer little boys; it makes 'em hoarse."

"The flowers stay in the dew all night," said Eugene thoughtfully, "and they are bright and fresh when the sun shines out. The birds have no shelter, yet their song is sweet and clear in the morning.

Why is the dew bad for little boys and not for them, Mammy?"

"Birds en flowers en t'ings ain't restituted like humans," she answered, looking kindly into the upturned face.

"My mother has sent me to bring you home, Miss Seymour," said Philip; and then he told Jenny why her brother did not accompany him.

"Dear Roger!" exclaimed Jenny, her eyes misty with tears; "I am sure it is not best for him to go to India now; but he is a veritable slave when duty calls him. You cannot understand, Valerie," she said, "how dear he is to me. He is all I have to love—except my friends," she added.

"Your brother is not going far away this time, Miss Seymour," interposed Philip; "only to Liverpool and back within the next five or six weeks. The voyage to the Indian Ocean and the outlying islands comes later."

They left the lake, which was situated beyond the rose garden, but within the same enclosure, and were walking along the gravel path which intersected the main walk leading to the veranda steps.

"I must run into the house and get my shawl and gloves," said Jenny, and she sped away. But before she had taken a half dozen steps in the direction of the hall, Aunt Patty, who had reached the house in advance of them, came out upon the veranda with the wrap and gloves and handed them to Jenny, who took them with a word of thanks.

Valerie started to follow Jenny, but the moment

her back was turned, Philip quickly took her hand with the changing opal on the white finger and pressed his lips upon it. She smiled and blushed and drew her hand away.

There was no time for a whispered word; Jenny was with them walking between Philip and Valerie, and together they went to the gate, where Uncle Jasper was waiting for them. He had turned the horses when he saw them coming, and held the bridle while Philip assisted Jenny to get in; then handed him the lines and opened the big iron gate with a sweep; bowed low when they passed out, and closing the gate went back to his work among the roses.

Uncle Jasper was a very proud old negro, and proudest of all of his good manners, which he learned when a waiting-boy to Wilfred's grandfather. There was one experience in Uncle Jasper's life which made a lasting impression on him. Nearly forty years ago he grew tired of feeding the horses and mules and driving the carriage and went out into the world to make his fortune.

Often now in the evening, when his light day's work was done, he would tell his son, Judge Dan'el Jackson, what befell him.

"Yer ain't never felt, Jedge," he would say solemnly, "what it is ter be hongry wiff nary a cent in yer pocket, en winter time er comin'. I walked all over de city hunting' fer wuck—I'd er done ennythin', fergettin' I wus raised er gentulman. But no! dere wa'n't nuthin' fer me ter do. I left de city w'en I couldn' stay dar no longer, en went ter de country,

hopin' ter git wuck on er farm tendin' de hosses er wuckin' in de fiel'. But no, erg'in! dere wa'n't no wuck ter be done, it 'peared lack—dough I seed plenty I could er done. I could er fed de horgs en mended de fences; I could er fetched in stove-wood, en water, en hepped stack wheat, too.

"Ev'ybody wus mighty smilin' en perlite, but ev'ybody tu'ned de same answer ter my impo'tunities, which wus, 'no, sir.'

"Ef yer kin b'l'eve it, Jedge, I went ter lots en lots ov folks way out yonner what looked lack *gentulmen* en *begged* fer wuck en er piece ov col' bread, but ev'ybody called me 'Mister Jackson' en said dar wer'n't no wuck ter do; en dey wus sorry, but dere wer'n't no bread left fum dinner.

"Den, recordin' es I didn' have no money, I got on de railroad track en I counted cross-ties all de way home.

"My young marster, Marse Wilfred's father,—he were yore namesake,—looked at me er long time w'en I 'rove ragged en dusty. His eyes got cur'us atter erw'ile en he said: 'It 'pears lack de worl' has handled yer rough, Jasper. Go ter de kitchin en tell Phebe ter give yer somethin' ter eat; en w'en yer has et plenty go ter de paster en git de mules en put 'em in de lot.' It wus de bes' sound I had hyeard sence I lef' home, en I cried w'en I went in de kitchin—I wuz so glad I couldn' he'p it; en Phebe cried, too, en atter erw'ile we got marri'd en I ain't never left home no more. En I'd more rudder have de little kids, 'Gene en Bertie, 'vide dere cakes en orwanges

wiff me en call me 'Uncle Jasper' den have de railroad itse'f call me 'Mister Jackson'!"

He always finished his story by dropping a live coal on his pipe full of tobacco, which he pressed down with his forefinger, and contentedly smoked the hours away.

"I likes ter serve rale gentulmen like Marse Wilfred en Marse Philip," mused Uncle Jasper as he searched among the rose bushes for his shears. "Dey al'ays 'members dere manners en never meks nobody nor nuffin' feel insig-nif-fer-kent, not even 'scusin' dat four-footed Mitts, what don' do much 'sides eat en sleep en play wiff de chillun, en bark.

"Now, whey kin dem shears be? I made shore I drapped 'em under dis bush."

He got down on his hands and knees and felt among the thorny branches until he found them.

"I knowed I couldn't be mistooken," he said, and he began to sing in a low voice as he resumed his work. But he had not clipped off a dozen fading flowers before Bertram's excited voice made him pause and turn, with the shears wide open in his hand, to see Mitts racing down the walk after a small something that was leaping fast before him.

"Stop Mitts, Uncle Jasper! Stop Mitts!" cried Bertram, following him as fast as he could.

But Uncle Jasper did not understand at first and stood staring.

"W'at's de matter, chile? Is dat dawg got de 'lirious tremlins?" he asked as Mitts stopped and with short, sharp barks began to dig under a board.

"It's a hopping frog," said Bertram, in answer to the old man's question; "please don't let him get it, Uncle Jasper!"

Uncle Jasper hung his shears on a limb of the bush he was trimming and took the little terrier in his hands, and picking up a handful of leaves he carefully brushed the moist earth off his nose and white paws. Then he gave him to Bertram, who held him close in his arms.

"Now, what is dis fire-'larm erbout?" Uncle Jasper asked.

"Bertie and I found a hopping frog under the doorsteps," answered Eugene, "and Bertie touched it with a stick to see if it was asleep, and it hopped out and Mitts got after it. We ought not to have 'sturbed it," he said seriously. "Do you think it can find its way back to its home under the steps, Uncle Jasper?"

"Law, yes, chile. Don't worry yer curly haid erbout dat frog. "En ef he don' fin' his way back," he added to himself, "it won' make no diffe'ence; de world'll move on jest de same. Er frog ain't no count dat ever I found out."

There are others more enlightened who share Uncle Jasper's erroneous belief. There was never yet anything created that was not given life for a good and specific purpose.

"Now," he said aloud, "bofe on yer hol' dat dawg. I'm er gwine ter lif' dis hidin' place en see what's under it; it pears ter be er place ov refuge."

He lifted the board and disclosed a small object with staring eyes.

"I knowed it wer'n't no frog," he said; "it ain't nuffin' but er hoppin' toad."

Mitts gave a smothered bark and wriggled violently when he saw the shining eyes, but Bertie held him close.

"Put the board over it again, Uncle Jasper," said Eugene. Then he and Bertie, with the dog in his arms, went back to the house.

When Philip and Jenny drove away, Valerie went into the garden and walked among the roses until the setting of the sun. Her face was grave and still; no smile hovered around her scarlet lips.

"I wish," she thought, "I had not heard those words of Mrs. Gray's. Try as I will I cannot forget them. They have cast a shadow over me! She was mistaken—there was no truth in what she repeated. Yet—I know Mrs. Stanley has a deep affection for Jenny, and Philip loves his mother devotedly; he would sacrifice much to please her. Would he marry Jenny if he were free? Oh! I cannot bear the thought. Philip is mine. He loved me before he ever saw Jenny Seymour, and I will not give him up!"

She raised her hand to brush the curls from her brow and her eyes rested on the opal,—changing, brilliant,—the colors more beautiful than ever. She pressed her lips upon it and a faint smile wreathed her lips as she remembered the promise given to Philip the day he placed it on her hand—the promise

that she would never take it from her finger while she loved him.

"Still, if Philip wished, if I knew it would be for his happiness—but I will not give him up!" She repeated. "I cannot! It would break my heart!"

How little she, the carefully sheltered and petted child, knew her own strength and sleeping pride.

She lingered in the garden, lovelier than any flower there, until the dew twisted the hair on her brow into glossy black ringlets, and the crimson glow slowly dropped from the western sky and seemed to rest on the river, which assumed beautiful flame-colored hues. These, in turn, faded, and the river once more appeared like a pale blue, smoke-like thread.

As the twilight deepened a sound heard every Southern summer night—the call of the whippoorwill—floated on the air.

Valerie left the garden to return to the house, but waited at the gate when she saw Wilfred and Eva driving down the lane.

Saladin, the graceful brown Arabian, came on, drawing the light buggy easily and swiftly. His glowing nostrils were distended; his long, silky mane flowing down his arched neck. He turned without a guiding touch and stopped at the gate. Wilfred and Eva stepped out of the buggy and Saladin went on to the stable, where Judge awaited him.

A spirit of mischief shone in Eva's eyes as she saw Valerie waiting for them.

"It is almost a pity," she thought, "to tease her,

but she is so gentle and child-like, in fact so saint-like, that I do not care to resist the temptation to make the roses come and go in her cheeks. Besides, no harm can come of it. She trusts Philip so implicitly."

As they passed up the walk Eva slipped her hand through Valerie's arm.

"Do you know, Valerie, dear," she said, "as we were coming out of Oakland we met Philip Stanley and Jenny Seymour. I thought she was to remain until this evening, when Captain Seymour would come for her. Why did she leave so early?"

"Captain Seymour is ordered to join the *Semiramis* at once," answered Valerie, shrinking instinctively from the touch of Eva's hand, "and Mrs. Stanley sent Philip for Jenny."

Eva laughed. Her voice was soft and musical, but to Valerie the sound was like a harsh discord.

"He was, apparently, very glad to be 'sent.' So engrossed were they with each other that Wilfred and I very nearly passed them before they were aware of our presence. Take care, Valerie! Girls like Jenny Seymour make formidable rivals; most men find that blue-eyed, clinging type irresistible. And Aunt Stanley, you know, will use her influence to keep Jenny with her. Remember the old adage, 'Forewarned—' "

Valerie drew away from her sister-in-law; the color faded from her face, leaving it as white as her dress; the hot blood surged in a torrent through her heart, a feeling of indignation sprang into life and

her lips trembled a moment. Then she answered in a cold, steady voice—a voice such as Eva had never heard her use before:

"If Doctor Stanley is weary of his engagement he has but to ask for his release." And she went on to the house, leaving Eva standing aghast at the result of her idly spoken words.

Valerie, her indignation subsided, waited at the door for Eva, and together they entered the house.

"I will be more careful," reflected Eva, whose greatest fault was thoughtlessness; "I never dreamed the child would be so vexed and make me such a spirited reply. I thought it best to let her know that Philip Stanley is but human and not beyond the possibility of falling in love with a girl like Jenny Seymour."

The engagement of Philip and Valerie was not known except to the family and a few intimate friends, and since Jenny Seymour came to Oakland there was a rumor wafted from lip to lip that the wealthy and gifted Philip Stanley had lost his heart to the sister of his friend, who was also his mother's god-daughter.

Eva had heard the whisperings, and while she knew they were mere idle gossip she thought a timely word of warning to Valerie might avert future heart-aches. Her words to Valerie when coming up the walk were not prompted wholly by her desire to see the color come and go in her cheeks. Eva, like many others, possessed the unfortunate ability to widen a breach she attempted to close.

"Wilfred got a letter this afternoon from your Uncle Horace, Valerie," said Eva; "he writes that his health is not improving and he fears he cannot come home in the summer as he hoped to do, and in case he is no better by the first of September he wants Wilfred to come to Bombay and help him close his vast business. He will then return with Wilfred and spend the remainder of his life in his native land."

"Uncle Horace has no kindred near him. Will Brother Wilfred go to India?" asked Valerie.

"Oh, yes," answered Eva, "he will go. He says that duty to his father's only brother will not allow him to do less."

Valerie walked to the window opening to the west and looked out. The sun had set. The last glow of crimson light had faded and left the sky a pale blue where a single star—the brilliant evening star—gleamed and scintillated, a lone, solitary light in a boundless ocean.

The twilight deepened. The shadows in the room grew denser and Eva rang for lights, which Uncle Jasper brought in. Wilfred came a few minutes later with Eugene and Bertram, who were telling him about Mitts chasing the frog from the door-steps down the walk to the Cape Jessamine bush. The culprit Mitts stood before them, holding up one forefoot, his small head turned to one side the better to look into the faces so far above him; his attitude and shining black eyes expressing keen attention.

"And, father," said Eugene, when the story was finished, "Uncle Jasper told us it was not a frog."

"Then what was it," asked Wilfred, who had listened to the recital with as much attention and courtesy as if the boys had been gentlemen grown.

"He said it was a hopping toad," answered Bertie in a shrill whisper.

Wilfred smiled as they all went out to supper.

Meanwhile Philip Stanley and Jenny Seymour drove on to Oakland.

When passing down one of the crowded streets they met Wilfred and Eva Lake, who were leaving the city.

Philip was directing Jenny's attention to a building in course of construction, and did not see them until they were passing, a fact which Eva promptly mentioned to Valerie.

Philip drove directly home. Captain Seymour met them at the gate and assisted his sister as she stepped from the phaeton, and holding her hand in his went into the house.

Philip gave some directions to Sam, then followed them. But before he ascended the steps Sam called to him and he turned to see a messenger from the telegraph office hastening to him.

The boy held a long yellow envelope in his hand; he gave it to Doctor Stanley and waited.

Philip tore open one corner and drew out the slip of paper and read it. He reflected a moment, then put the telegram in his pocket and turned to Sam, who was standing by the horses pretending to be fastening a buckle, but in reality waiting to find out what the telegram was about.

"Take the horses to Sophocles," Philip said to him, "and tell him to have the surrey at the door at a quarter to seven. Then come to me."

Sam touched his cap.

"Yassir," he said, and springing into the phaeton he drove to the stable.

Philip drew a small book and pencil from his pocket and wrote a few words. He tore the leaf from the book and handed it to the boy; he then paid and dismissed him and went to his room, where Sam soon joined him.

"Get out my large valise," he said, "and go down stairs and send your mistress to me."

Sam quickly and silently obeyed.

He found Mrs. Stanley in the dining-room, giving Aunt Tildy directions about supper.

"If you please, Miss," said Sam, "Marse Philip is a packin' up—seems like he is going away, and he requests that you will perceed to him at once."

"Say that I will be with him in a few minutes," Mrs. Stanley answered.

She soon left Aunt Tildy and hastened to her son's room.

"He has a call out of town and must go at once," she thought. "Too bad, when he wanted to be at home this afternoon."

Philip was putting his case of instruments in the valise when his mother came in.

"Sam tells me, Philip," she said, coming to his side, "that you are going away."

Philip smiled.

"Sam's message was in excess of his orders," he said. "I am going to Mobile for a few days, though I did not tell him so when I sent for you. I want you to pack my valise, mother; I will be at the hospital about a week."

The mother's face grew pale.

"Why, what is the matter, Philip! You are not ill?" she asked, her voice full of suppressed emotion.

"I! Oh, no," he answered, as he closed the case he was examining. "I have just had a telegram from Doctor Drayton; he is to perform a very difficult operation to-morrow at ten o'clock and urges me to come and assist him. I must leave on the seven o'clock train if I am to be at the hospital on time. So you see there are not many minutes to lose. That is why I sent for you to help me."

And the mother, as indulgent as if her son were seven instead of twenty-seven, went to work and soon finished the light task imposed upon her.

And down in the parlor, Jenny, on the verge of tears, was talking to her brother.

"O Roger," she was saying, "if you would only try to conquer your love for the sea, and get some other employment! Every time you leave me I fear that you will never return—that the dreadful ocean will claim and keep you forever."

Seymour looked into the timid blue eyes, in color the exact counterpart of his own, and a feeling of pity for this lonely sister filled his heart. He had youth and strength and the ability to successfully

battle with the world, and for himself did not waste a thought on his lost property.

But he did regret the loss on his sister's account. She was not fitted by nature to be a teacher and the irksome life weighed upon her; but she was independent and refused to remain idle and be a burden on her brother. And when the dark day came and they were left penniless she had bravely joined the ranks of teachers.

From his boyhood the sea had held a strange fascination for Roger Seymour, and when it became necessary for him to rebuild his fallen fortunes he turned with unerring instinct to the one thing he could do best. He had been promoted rapidly, and at the end of two years' service with the Q. T. Company he held a lucrative and responsible position.

He would have been happy in the life he led, which bade fair, in a few years, to make him independent, but for one thing. Even as he loved the sea, Jenny feared it. And so deep-rooted was her aversion to it that Roger could never persuade her to go with him on any voyage.

So but little of his time for two years had been spent with her up to the day he came, an invalid, to Oakland. They had been separated many months, and Mrs. Stanley, kind and thoughtful, sent for Jenny that the brother and sister might be together while he was at her home.

Those weeks were ended now. Work time had come and Seymour was glad that it was so. His stay in Oakland had been pleasant, but mingled with the

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pleasure was a drop of bitterness; he had been learning a lesson from a book hitherto closed to him—a lesson that sometimes brings happiness, but ofttimes brings woe.

As he turned the leaves of the book life became sweeter and a beautiful rose hue enveloped the world, until one day he found the name of a friend inscribed on the page, and instantly the rose color faded, leaving a dull-gray cloud. Then came the battle to banish the image of the girl with witching face and brilliant, star-like eyes from his heart. He told himself he could never succeed, but he struggled on, and ofttimes, to help him, a vision—a fair face and shadowy hazel eyes—floated before him.

Truly, Roger Seymour did not know his own heart.

Mrs. Stanley, knowing that the brother and sister would have much to say to each other, did not, when she left her son's room, return to the parlor until the clock on the mantel was chiming a quarter past six.

"Jenny," Seymour was saying, "in all probability I will not see you again in eighteen months; when I return to Mobile from Liverpool I may not have time to run up here, even for a day. I do not like to leave you drudging in that school-room. It is not necessary for you to teach now, since my salary is sufficient to keep you in comfort. Will you give up your school?

Jenny shook her head.

"Not yet," she said; "Work of some kind is best for me."

Uncle Sophocles, true to his boast "that he never kept his gentulmen waiting," had the surrey at the door at a quarter to seven. Philip and Seymour entered it and were driven to the station. They boarded the train and at eight o'clock the next morning they reached Mobile. They were driven to the hospital and the friends parted at the door; Philip entered the building, where Doctor Drayton anxiously awaited him, and Seymour went on to the wharf where the *Semiramis* lay at anchor, loaded and ready for the voyage. He went on board, and the officers and crew, who liked and respected their young captain, gave him a hearty, sailor-like welcome, and a few hours later they weighed anchor and sailed for Liverpool.

CHAPTER VII

"STORIES"

It was Sunday morning. The shrill, piercing whistles of the cotton factory and ice plants, of the cement works and compress, were mute. The great furnaces no longer glowed with a white heat. The fire had burned down to blackened ashes.

The ponderous machinery, which revolved with lightning-like rapidity and roared with a deafening voice six days in the week, lay motionless; and silence, save for the ringing of the church bells, brooded over the city of Oakland.

A light rain had fallen the night before and washed the dust from the leaves and flowers, and they, fresh and pure, raised their faces to greet the morning sun.

The grass that grew along the sidewalks and in the yards and lawns took on a brighter hue; and as the sunshine fell upon the roofs and walls of the city homes they shone as if newly painted.

Still, the church bells called—the only sound that broke the Sabbath quiet—and soon, in answer to the call, the doors opened and the people, sometimes whole families, came forth and wended their way to the various churches.

Yesterday the dust of the streets rose in clouds beneath the hurrying feet; to-day it lay immovable

beneath the weight of the rain drops and the world seemed new and fresh and undefiled.

A mile to the eastward of Oakland was Midway Chapel, the negro church. It was a small country church built in a grove of tall pines. Fastened to the top of a sassafras pole near the door was the bell which twice a month called the worshipers from far and near. They came in crowds, many more than the church could hold; and while waiting between the morning, afternoon, and night service they grouped themselves on the carpet of soft brown needles under the pines.

The preacher divided the time between the Oakland church and Midway Chapel; he came to-day to fill the pulpit at the latter place, followed by many of his city members, among whom was Sam, his shiny black face aglow with vanity as he surveyed his Sunday clothes.

Uncle Sophocles had promised, in consideration of a piece of tobacco as long and as wide as two fingers, to attend to the "bisness" for him and let him stay at church until after night meeting. His best friend, Judge Dan'el Jackson, was to be at church, too, that day, and Sam was happy.

But Judge was not among the earliest arrivals; he first went to Oakland with Eugene and Bertram Lake, who did not stay at the church after the morning service. When it was over Wilfred brought them out and helped them in the buggy; Judge drove home with them and spent the remainder of

the day as he wished, and he always chose to go to church.

When he got home to-day with the little boys and had given them in charge of their mammy, Uncle Jasper told him he could not feed and water the mules that night and he would have to come home before dark.

Judge stared.

"Oh, you needn' look at me datter way," said his father, "you mus' come home."

The look of disappointment which dropped over Judge's face would have softened a heart harder than Uncle Jasper's, but Uncle Jasper's eyes were cast down and he did not see it.

"Why, daddy, w'at's de matter?" exclaimed Judge. "You done tole me yer'd 'tend ter de bisness fer me."

"I knows I did," answered Uncle Jasper, raising his eyes. "I knows I did, but I didn' teck no 'count ov de rheumaticks in my back."

Judge hesitated a moment, then put his hand in his pocket and drew out a small brown-paper package.

"How's dat?" he asked, handing it to his father.

Uncle Jasper's small black eyes grew brighter as he took it and slipped it in his pocket.

"Dis 'll do," he said; "it's been knowed ter holp rheumaticks en many yuther 'flictions. On secon' 'sideration I'll be able ter 'tend ter all de bisness ter-night en yer kin go 'long. But min' yer gits in 'fore midnight."

Judge waited for no other bidding, but hurried away.

"Dar now," said Aunt Phebe, "yer never tol' dat boy ter kiver de well. Dat ole kyerb is mighty nigh fallin' en I's 'feared sumfin 'll git in it."

"Dat's so," answered Uncle Jasper. "But nev' min'. Nuffin' ain' never fell in it yit, en I 'tends ter git some ov de boys jest es soon es de water gits er leetle lower en clean it out. Den I'll meck er new kyerb."

"Dere ain't so much water in de well," said Aunt Phebe; "it's gittin' muddy en it don't tas'e good. Better clean it out en fix de kyerb in de mawnin'. I's skeered I'll fall in ev'y time I draws er bucket ov water; it's gittin' dang'us."

"Dere ain't no 'casion ter hurry," returned Uncle Jasper, filling his pipe with tobacco. "De water is boun' ter git lower ef it don' rain; en it stan's ter reason de wuck 'll be lighter ef de water is skurser. Dat's one why I's been waitin' all dese weeks. It ain't best ter 'tege yerse'f when dere ain't no 'casion fer it.

"I'll lay sum plank over it ter-morrer en trust ter Prov'dence ter keep t'ings er way from it twell de water gits lower."

Aunt Phebe tossed her head.

"Yer's layin' by wuck fer sumbody, Jasper Jackson. Marse Wilfred don't know de ricketyness ov dat kyerb er he 'd er done tole yer ter fix it long ergo. It won' be es hard ter drive in er few nails es it will

be ter pull one ov de mules out'en it. Don't fergit I done tole yer."

Though he laughed at it now, Uncle Jasper had occasion to remember the warning a few hours later.

Aunt Phebe was right about the well. The curb was in a dangerous condition, and none of the negroes would mend it because Wilfred Lake had not noticed it and given orders to have the work done.

Uncle Jasper's house was nearest the lot and barns where the horses and mules were kept, and as he and his son Judge attended to them the other negroes who used water from the well waited for him to keep it in good condition. But Uncle Jasper had neglected it.

True to his promise to Judge, Uncle Jasper attended to the "bisness" for him, which meant feeding the horses and mules. He finished the work by sunset, left the keys in the house, and went into the kitchen, where Aunt Phebe was getting the early supper ready.

"Dat two-year-old colt ain' come up ter night," remarked Uncle Jasper. "I's 'feared he followed Marse Wilfred when he rid off; dat 'll be too bad ef he did, fer Marse Wilfred won' come home twell termorrer evenin'."

"No, he didn' follow," said Aunt Phebe; "I seed him sence."

"I don' know which er way ter go ter look fer 'im," said Uncle Jasper; "I hopes he won' git inter no trubble 'fore mawnin'." And he sat down behind the stove.

As the daylight faded, but before the darkness came, the two little negroes, Jake and Mose, with their sharp-nosed dog Brag, came down the path leading to Aunt Phebe's house. Their grandmother had sent them with a message to Aunt Phebe—a message they did not deliver that night.

When they were nearing the lot they saw the colt walking fast before them, as if hurrying to reach the stall before it was closed.

"Can't he walk fas'," said Mose.

"You bet he kin!" answered Jake; "but yer orter jest see him run. Ef yer b'l'eve me he kin run 'mos' es fas' es Marse Philip's Stella."

"I don't b'l'eve it," said Mose.

"Yer don't? Den I dares yer ter t'row er stick at 'im!" retorted Jake.

"En I dares yer ter say 'sick 'im' ter Brag."

Neither could take a dare. A long slim stick whizzed past the colt's ears and at the same time Brag, in obedience to a single word, sprang at his feet. The frightened colt threw his head high and broke into a run which showed the skeptical Mose that he might one day, if not now, equal the fleet Stella.

He ran at full speed until stopped by a fence which he could not jump. The dog was close behind him and Mose and Jake were running as fast as they could, waving their hands and calling the dog to come back.

Their appearance terrified the colt afresh, and he turned from the fence and ran across the yard; the

well was directly in his path; he did not turn aside, but raised himself to spring across it. Only his fore feet cleared the curb. He remained motionless a moment, then the decaying timbers gave way and the colt fell with a loud splash to the water twenty feet below, and all was still.

Jake and Mose were horrified and their faces were blank with fear. Their first impulse was to run away, but when the colt began to struggle in the water they came to the edge of the well and looked down, but they could see nothing; all was dark.

"He ain' killed, Mose," said Jake in a whisper, his teeth chattering; "us 'll hatter tell Uncle Jasper he done fell in."

They stooped yet lower, and Brag came up and put his fore feet on Mose's back. Mose in terror threw his hands behind him, and clasping Brag's paws sprang forward, and boy and dog were in the well with the colt!

Brag gave a howl, and the boys uttered yells of terror which waked the sleeping echoes.

Uncle Jasper and Aunt Phebe were sitting at the kitchen table eating their supper when the colt struck the water; and Aunt Phebe raised her head and listened.

"What wus dat soun', ole man?"

"I never heard nuffin'," answered Uncle Jasper, raising his cup of coffee to his lips.

The next moment the screams reached his ears, the cup fell from his hand, and the coffee marked a path across the cloth.

Phebe and Jasper sprang from the table, upsetting it.

"Oh! mussy, mussy!" cried Aunt Phebe, her hands raised above her head, her face ashen. "De well, Jasper, de well! Sumthin's in de well! Run fer yer life!"

Uncle Jasper needed no urging, but Aunt Phebe was before him. When they got to the well Jake was jumping up and down and screaming.

"What's de matter yere?" asked Uncle Jasper. "What's in de well?"

But Jake could not answer.

Aunt Phebe drew nearer, and cautiously leaning over looked down the well.

"What's de matter down dar?" she cried. "Is ennybody in trubble?"

"Ef yer please, ma'm, it's me, Aunt Phebe; it's me en Brag en de colt, en us 'll all be drownded ef us can't git out. Oh, please, Aunt Phebe, ax Uncle Jasper ter pull us out!"

"Yer hear dat, Jasper!" cried Aunt Phebe. "What's ter be done?"

"Fust t'ing," answered Uncle Jasper, "we wants more light on de subjec'. You run ter de kitchen en git de lantern; en Jake, yer stop dat noise en go quick es yer kin ter Bre'r Isaac's house en tell him ter come ter my resistance immediate. Tell him what's happened yere, en tell him Marse Wilfred's gone erway, Marse Philip's in Mobile; all de cullud folks is at church en I ain' got nobody ter he'p me. En when I gits t'rough wid dis bisness I's gwine ter

settle wid yer good; yer done sumfin' ter dat colt—I knows yer did! Now hurry ef yer don' want all on 'em ter drown."

Jake sped away, sobbing as he ran. Aunt Phebe got the lantern, and together they peered down the well, where a woeful picture met their eyes.

The colt had fallen on his feet and appeared to be standing on the bottom of the well. The water was level with his back, and as he held his head high he seemed in no immediate danger of drowning.

Mose was sitting on the colt's back, his terror-stricken face upturned to the light, and the dog was clinging to the inner curb.

"Dey is all right fer erwhile," said Uncle Jasper; "but how ter git 'em out is de queschun. Dere ain't no ladder here long 'nough ter retch de bottom ov de well, neider is dere er wilderness here."

"Ef we had er wilderness we could wind 'em up. Yer jest set on dat colt, sonny, en yer Uncle Jasper 'll git yer out.

"How did yer git in dar, ennyway?"

Mose began to cry.

"Brag shoved me in," he said.

"Hi! W'at's dat?" exclaimed Uncle Jasper. "W'at wus yer doin' 'round yere?"

"De colt he fell in fust," said Mose, "en me en Jake wus lookin' at 'im, en Brag—en Brag—"

"Pore chile," said Aunt Phebe, "he's skeered."

Uncle Jasper looked at her severely.

"Dar's sumfin' at de bottom ov dis, Phebe," he

said, "en I mean ter fin' out w'at it is. Dat colt didn't jump in dis well widout he'p."

Then he turned again to Mose.

"Ef yer wants to git out ov yere ter-night, yer better 'fess yer guilt. Did yer put dat dawg atter de colt?"

And Mose, with many tears, confessed.

"Now I'll see w'at kin be done ter 'leve de sitervation," said Uncle Jasper.

Eva was upstairs with Aunt Patty and the children and did not hear the cries of distress, but Valerie, who was sitting on the veranda, was startled by them, and she hastened down the hall and through the kitchen to the back door, where she met Aunt Phebe, who told her what had happened.

"En Jasper done sont me fer de keys, Missy, ter git out de ropes time es Bre'r Isaac gits here."

"Oh! do tell them to hurry," exclaimed Valerie.

"Yes, Missy, I'll tell 'em; but de ladder won't retch de groun' en dere ain' no wilderness here."

"Mose is very small and may drown before they get a ladder made," said Valerie. "Tell Uncle Jasper to lower a rope and draw him out; make a loop in one end to pass under his arms."

"De very thing!" exclaimed Aunt Phebe, as she got the keys and went back to the well.

In a short time a rope was let down and Mose was directed to slip the loop around his waist.

"Please, Uncle Jasper," said Mose, when they were ready to haul him up, "kin I bring Brag wid me? I's 'feared ter leave 'im."

"How yer gwine ter bring dat dawg, boy?" asked Isaac.

"Ef you gentulmens kin hole bofe on us at de same time," answered Mose, "I'll teck him in my arms; he can't hole on ter de kyerb much longer, Brag can't."

The appeal was not to be resisted, and Isaac slowly drew the boy and dog to the top of the well, where Uncle Jasper waited to catch the rope and land them on dry ground.

When Jake returned with Isaac, Uncle Jasper told him to go to Midway Chapel and tell Judge to come home.

" 'Form him of de catesterfe we's had en tell him ter fetch he'p," added Aunt Phebe.

Jake started off, but stopped when he got in the shadows and waited to see them draw Mose and Brag out.

"Undo yer arms en let de dawg drap so I kin git de rope offen yer, honey," said Uncle Jasper, when Mose was once more standing on the ground.

Mose obeyed, and Brag, none the worse for his swim, shook himself and rolled in the sand.

Jasper slipped the rope off Mose and very carefully shook him and felt him all over to see if any bones were broken.

"You's all ra't," he said when his examination was finished; "all yer needs now is er good warmin' up," and he gave a look full of meaning to Aunt Phebe—a look which sent a new chill of terror to Mose's heart.

"Take 'im, Phebe," he said, "en lay dem switches on good en hard; it 'll do 'im more good den ginger tea."

But Mose did not wait for the promised warming up; he made a desperate effort and broke away from Uncle Jasper. He soon overtook Jake, and they did not slacken their steps until they reached the church.

They told their story to Judge, whom they found outside the building. In a moment Sam and Judge, followed by a half dozen others, were on the way to the scene of action.

"Jest think ov de sitervation!" exclaimed Judge. "I done paid daddy ter 'tend ter de bisness fer me ter-night, en here I is on de road home 'fore moon up."

"How much did it cost you, Judge?" asked Sam sympathetically.

"I gin him er whole half plug ov terbacco," answered Judge. "I might es well kep' it en come home 'fore night; I's los' de meetin' en de 'backer, too."

The three were standing around the well listening to the colt splashing the water when the crowd arrived.

"Jest look at 'im, gentulmen," said Judge, moving the lantern so that the light would fall down the well. "He's all ret; he won' drown dere 'fore mawnin', cause he's standin' on de bottom. Dat suttenly is good. We can't do nuffin' widout er ladder en er wilderness; we'll hatter meck 'em fust t'ing in de mawnin'."

"We ain' er gwine ter wait twell mawnin'," said Uncle Jasper; "dat colt mus' come out now. De ox is in de ditch, gentulmen; en ef de ox ain' in de ditch de colt's in de well. It's de same t'ing."

"Here's ten on us; five ov you boys go down yonner in de branch en cut two saplin's twenty foot long en make er ladder es quick es yer kin. Me en Bre'r Isaac en de yudders 'll meck er wilderness. Hurry now!"

And they went to work with a will and in a short time had the ladder and windlass made.

The ladder was put down the well and Judge and Sam descended; they stepped off the ladder and went down into the water over their armpits. They were frightened, but fear lent swiftness to their hands, and they soon had the ropes around the colt's body.

"Ef yer'll b'l'eve me," Judge called to the ones above him, "dis colt would er been drownded sho', but fer one t'ing; he is got his footses planted squar' on de san'-box."

"I al'lays knowed he wus er 'telligent colt," said Uncle Jasper.

Sam and Judge came out of the well and willing hands began to turn the windlass.

"Shine yer eyes, gentulmen of the jury, and pull all together!" cried Sam.

"Do yer juty, folkses at de yudder en', en he'p pull!" called Judge, bending to the work.

Slowly, and inch by inch, the rope grew shorter,

until the colt's back was on a level with the mouth of the well.

Four pairs of hands reached out and caught the rope; the hands at the ends of the windlass slackened it, and with a swing the colt was safe.

"Now rub 'im dry," commanded Jasper, "en tu'n him loose in er box-stall."

Somebody left the lot gate unfastened after putting the colt in the stable, and Pompey pushed it open with his nose and walked out, the gate closing behind him.

Judge discovered his absence the next morning when he went to feed, and after breakfast he went in search of him.

At the same time Uncle Sophocles went out to his morning work and found old Jerry's stall empty. He asked his mistress to let Sam go and get him, as he was afraid Jerry would break into the cornfield and eat enough to kill himself.

Mrs. Stanley consented and Sam went away. He soon met Judge, and they continued the search together.

"Sam," said Judge, "did yer ever know it ter fail fer sumthin' ter happen on Sunday?"

Sam acknowledged that it was often the case.

"Es ef it wer'n't enough fer de colt ter put hisse'f in de well last night, dese ole mules mus' git out en keep us fum havin' fun he'pin' clean it out."

"Did I ever tell you 'bout the fire what cornsumed our paster fence last October when you was travelin' with Marse Wilfred?" asked Sam, who had been to

school several months each year for ten years, and was considered a marvel of learning by Judge, who had been to school only five years.

"We never could find who done it," began Sam, "but our 'spicions p'inted to some 'possum-hunters. The fire started two miles from our paster one Friday night; the wind was blowing and it swept right down like a—a—avanlanche. Me and all the folks on the place fou't it all day Sunday and conkered it, as we b'l'eved. We recked 'round the fence everywhere 'ceptin' one little place no wider than that crick; we never mistrusted the fire would get in it, as everywhere close 'round was burned off. We went to church Sunday mornin' and left everythin' carm, but 'fore twelve o'clock we what was on the outside of the church seed smoke arisin', and seemed like we knowed what was the matter.

"We run all the way home to fin' the fence aburnin'; the fire had whipped 'round and got in that little strip ov leaves and dere it was a roarin'.

"Well, sir, we done the hardest day's work that evenin' what we had 'sperienced that year.

"The fire raged on twell it got ahind of Uncle Sophocles'es house. The sound was like a midnight train and the sparks was fallin' everywhere.

"Dere wus cotton bales layin' 'round and the folkses what wer'n't fightin' fire toted water and poured on 'em. It looked like everythin' would go, but by night we got it stopped and most of the folks went back to church. All but Uncle Sophocles," added Sam; "he got such a scare when the fire crope

so nigh his house that he couldn't do nuthin' all night but watch the burnin' logs and stumps."

"It sholy wus a gre't fire," agreed Judge; "I wish I had er been dar ter he'p wid it. But Marse Wilfred wus needin' my 'tention den en I went wid him."

They walked on in silence a few minutes.

"I wonder," said Sam, "where them mules kin be."

"I don't know," answered Judge, "we ain't seed 'em yit.

"Mentionin' dat 'possum-hunter," he said, " 'minds me ov a 'sperience w'at happened ter me one time I went 'possum-huntin'. One day or yudder I wus plowin' in de field neares' de woods w'en de dawgs come ter me jest lack dee wanted ter go huntin'. I plowed ter de end ov de row en tied de mule—dis same ole Pompey what I's huntin' now—en called de dawgs en went in de woods jest er leetle way. I didn' 'spect ter stay long 'cause daddy mout come ennytime. Well, I hadn' bin huntin' more dan ha'f er hour w'en dem dawgs treed in 'er holler log en dere wus er 'possum sho' es yer live—er 'possum in de daytime!

"I got 'im out en tuck 'im home en put 'im in er empty bar'l twell de next day, w'ich wus Sad'day, en mill-day."

"That was good huntin'," interrupted Sam.

"It wus sho'," said Judge. "But wait twell I tell yer de endin' ov it.

"I got er hick'ry stick four foot long en split one

end ov it erbout er foot en put de 'possum's tail in it—de split ends clamped it, yer un'erstand."

"I knows how it's done," said Sam; "have fixed many myse'f."

"I put 'im in de wagin," continued Judge, "en started out ter sell 'im fer er quarter. We had ter cross de crick en clam' de hill, en w'en I looked back dar wus de stick but de 'possum wus gone, en I ain't seed him sence."

"I symperthizes with you," said Sam; "it was a clean loss."

Mose and Jake, followed as ever by Brag, were coming along the road.

Sam and Judge stopped to speak to them.

"Have yer seed them two old mules, Pompey en Jerry?" asked Judge. "We's been lookin' fer 'em all day."

"We seed free down yonder in de bottom field what ain't tended," they answered; "but we don' know wedder dem wus dee er no."

They passed by quickly, as if afraid they would be chided for frightening the colt the evening before; and Sam and Judge went on to the field lying along the creek bank.

"Ef dem is dee our search is mos' finish', en we needn' hurry mo'," said Judge. "We kin set down on de log unner de beech tree en res' en cool off."

"I most know the third mule the chillun mentioned is a hoss," said Sam; "and if it is it b'longs to the Reveren' Mr. Hatton, the preacher. He's in a bad fix, too—the hoss, I mean."

"The preacher bought him cheap in the spring, and as he didn't have no use for him he's been hiring him out to a man across the crick to plow his crop; the man couldn't pay much and the preacher let him have the hoss for his board—just plenty of corn and fodder and good treatmen'.

"But he didn't git neither—"

"Looks lack dis log wus rolled here er pu'pose fer us, Sam," interrupted Judge when they stood under the beech tree; "I knows f'um 'sperience it's er good place ter res'. En how cool en fresh de water look er glidin' ober de pebbles en white san'. I mus' hev er drink."

"Me, too," said Sam.

They took off their hats, and turning them inside out dipped them into the running water and raised them to their lips.

When they had satisfied their thirst they sat down on the log and Sam resumed his story.

"As I was going to tell you when the water 'rupted the discourse, the old sorrel didn't get full board and pious treatment. Most all the cullud folks knowed his condition, but it ain't best to interfere with yuther folkses bisness and nobody wouldn't tell the preacher 'bout it twell he found it out for hisself. Then us all told him what we knowed, and he sont for the hoss and brought him home.

"Sholy, he was in a 'strestful condition. His back was scun and bofe shoulders was bruised; he was lame in one fore foot cause the huff had growed too

long without trimming, and when it broke off it split.

"And atop of all his yuther 'flictions he had lampers and he couldn't eat much.

"So Mr. Hatton turned him out a week ago last Chuesday to try the benefits of the cane. He wer'n't much account, no how. The man what sold him to the preacher knowed more about hosses than the preacher did and cheated him—that is to say, it would have been cheating in anything 'cepting a hoss trade. Of course, eve'ything what's done in a hoss trade is kerrect."

"Of co'se it is," assented Judge. "Ev'ybody knows dat."

"The preacher," continued Sam, "don't know no more about trading hosses than that forener what I heard Marse Philip reading of knowed about the South."

"Tell me w'at yer is talkin' erbout, Sam," said Judge.

"To tell you the trufe, Judge," returned Sam, "I didn't unnerstand it much. The South is a fer country, it seems, and Marse Philip was reading in one of the papers what comes from way out yonner that the forener what rid through the South on a steam train one dark night when the moon was set went home and writ a book telling all about the way the natives live, and folkses b'l'eved it 'cause he had been there."

A crested red-bird rested a moment on a twig of

the beech tree, its brilliant dress shining among the green leaves.

Judge picked up a pebble and threw it at the bird; it struck against one of the larger limbs and fell back to the ground. The red-bird spread its wings and was gone.

"Dere is one more t'ing I wants yer ter tell me," said Judge, as he watched the flight of the bird; "what's er native?"

"I don't know," answered Sam candidly. "I never studied about natives when I went to school, and as I never seed one I can't tell perzactly what they look lack. I has an idee that they is a kind of animal what lives in thickets and yuther swampy places."

The definition satisfied Judge.

When Pompey pushed open the gate and let himself out he walked around the crib picking up stray bits of fodder. He did not care for it, however, as Uncle Jasper had given him two bundles for his supper, and some of it was still in the rack over the manger.

But he did want green corn and he would go to the field and perhaps he could find a weak place in the fence where he could get over and help himself.

He had been asking Judge for a change of feed, but he either could not or would not understand and had not given it to him. Pompey was grateful for the sheltering night. No one could see him as he hurried on to the field where grim disappointment

awaited him; for try as he would he could not break the fence.

He passed down one side of it, pressing his breast against each post as he went, but they were firmly planted in the ground and resisted his efforts to break them down. At last, as day was dawning, he stopped at the corner of the field and looked across at the waving leaves shining and dripping with dew.

How sweet and tempting it looked; and how far beyond his reach!

Pompey fancied he heard voices in the field and drew back in the shadow of a tree. He feared some one was coming in search of him and he was not yet ready to return to the lot. He waited and listened, but no one came.

The sound he heard was the voice of the morning wind wakening the birds and whispering to the growing corn, the lowly grass, and the wayside flowers.

A squirrel left his nest in the hollow of an oak and in an instant had climbed a stalk of corn, and tearing the leaves closely folded around the half-ripened ear began to eat the milky grains.

The runaway mule, in a way peculiar to horses and mules, rested himself on one foot; his ears and head drooped, his eyes closed. Pompey was asleep.

Suddenly he was awakened by a step—there was no mistaking the sound this time, something was approaching. Could that boy Judge have followed and found him so soon? He was wide-awake now, and

with head raised and ears pointed forward he stood still and waited.

The steps drew nearer and old Jerry walked around the corner of the fence and past the tree under which Pompey was hiding.

Pompey lowered his head until he could see between the thick leaves, then with a call of recognition he left the shadows and joined his old friend.

They put their noses together and talked in a language quite intelligible to each other.

"I want some green corn," said Jerry; "I have tried the fence from the maple tree to this corner and there is not a weak spot in it. Come with me and together we may break through on this side."

"No use," answered Pompey laconically; "I have pushed against ever post and we cannot get in. But I know where there is a thicket of cane on the creek bank; we will go there and get breakfast." And they walked on side by side, stopping occasionally to nip the tender dew-drenched grass; they stopped, too, for a drink of water at the branch where a few hours later Judge and Sam loitered.

"I think," said Jerry, "we will find Sorrel Hatton down here; I heard Sophocles and Sam saying he had been turned on the cane. I want you to meet him and hear his sad story; although I have known him only a few months, I believe he is a thoroughly trustworthy and reliable horse."

Pompey replied that he would be pleased to make the acquaintance of his friend's friend, and they waded the branch and crossed the field to the farthest

side, where the cane was growing. While they were yet a long distance from the growth of trees they saw a shadowy object move and disappear in the deeper shadows.

"There is Sorrel now," said Jerry; "he has seen but not recognized us, and is hiding. I will speak to him."

He raised his harsh voice and called; a softer voice answered and a dejected-looking horse left the shadows and came to meet them.

"Sorrel," said Jerry, "I want you to tell Pompey Lake the story of the last five years of your life as you told it to me; he has a tender heart and will give you sympathy."

"It is not a pleasant story to listen to," said Sorrel, "but if your friend wishes to hear it I will tell it to him. I will be twenty years old when the grass withers, but I feel as if the weight of three score years was upon my back. I am broken in strength and spirit, and I cannot work enough to buy my oats. And when a horse cannot work—"

Sorrel found no words to complete the sentence and shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Fifteen years of my life were pleasant. I had as many comforts as usually fall to the lot of horses. I was high spirited, but willing to put my shoulder to anything that came. The work was never too heavy and it was my pride to do it well.

"The master I lived with first died and I was sold; the man who bought me was not kind to me—he would ride and drive me too fast for my age and I

was often sore and stiff. But I always did my best. He kept me three years, then as I was too old for a fast saddle horse he traded me to a man in the city, who put me to a heavy dray.

"Think of it, Pompey and Jerry, and pity me! I was eighteen years old and made to pull a load heavy enough for two young horses. My master was not a cruel man, but oh! so thoughtless; he would tell the driver I was eating his corn and oats and I must not be idle."

"We have heard of that kind," said Pompey and Jerry; "they bring much suffering to our family. If men would sometimes imagine themselves in our places they would treat us with more consideration."

"I had to work all day," continued Sorrel, "and often the driver would not loosen the check line for hours and hours, and how my neck would ache! I shall never forget the last day I worked for that man."

"The streets were wet and slippery. I was drawing a heavy load up grade, when I stepped on a nail. Oh! how it hurt me. I wanted to stop, but I had been taught to go forward and I kept on; I hoped the driver would see that I was suffering and tell me to stop, but he did not.

"I got the load to the top of the hill. There was a mud hole a few steps farther on and the wheels went down to the hubs. I pulled—and pulled hard, with all the strength of my almost twenty years, but I could not get them out.

"I do not believe any one horse of my age could

have done better. The driver saw I could not get the wagon out and used his whip. The lash stung me and I sprang forward and went down.

"I could not get up; my shoulder was sprained.

"Many people came and stood around me. Some pitied my condition, and others said I was an old horse and it did not matter so much if I was lame—the loss would be the less.

"The words had a cruel sound to me and my heart was heavy, until I reflected that it was thoughtlessness and not cruelty that prompted the words.

"The harness was taken off me and I was pulled to my feet.

"An old white-haired negro with two little boys in a buggy was driving by. The oldest child, I think he was about four years old, told the old man to stop; he objected, but the child insisted, and the man took him by the arms and put him on the ground and he came across the street and gave me an apple.

"I want to meet that boy again, and when my back gets well give him a ride."

"I know that boy," said Pompey, his eyes large and bright. "He was traveling last summer with his father and mother. He lives at our place and his name is Eugene."

"I was led away limping, and put in my stall," said Sorrell, "and the next day my master and another man came and looked at me. The man—I learned later that he was a veterinarian—looked at my feet and my teeth and thumped my shoulders,

and when he finished he said I would never be able to work much more. As soon as I could walk I was sent to a farm, where there were many other broken-down horses.

"I stayed there many months and one day my master and the veterinarian made me another visit; they leaned on the fence and looked at me.

" 'He will do now,' my master said; 'it is time I was getting my money back.'

" 'It is a good time to begin the work,' the other said; and they trimmed my feet and filed my teeth and put me in a dark stable and fed me for two weeks.

"Then they took me to another State and sold me for a ten-year-old home-raised horse! You know what my life has been the last few months. My new master had nothing for me to do. He thought he would do a deed of charity, he did not know I was old and broken, and he gave me to a man to plow.

"I was always willing to do my best and I tried to keep going, but I was not used to that kind of work and gave out. The cruel band scorched my back and the skin came off. The man might have made a small wooden rack for the back band to rest in, but I suppose he did not know how to do it. I knew, but I could not tell him.

"There were seams, too, in the collar lining that hurt my shoulders, and the old bruises were soon as bad as ever. I was turned on the cane two weeks ago to-morrow. I am nervous and full of fears; if a rabbit crosses my path suddenly, or a covey of par-

tridges whirr from under my feet, my heart seems to stand still with dread."

"Come home with me," said Pompey. "My master will give you a stall and something to eat and will not charge you work for it; he is very thoughtful.

"I am twenty-two years old, and so well have I been treated that I might easily pass for fifteen. I never work enough to hurt me."

"And I was thirty when the first cotton bloomed," said Jerry. "Philip's father bought me when I was six and Philip was three; I have lived with him ever since. I do not work now. Sophocles took me out once three months ago to plow the potato patch, and when he brought me in I laid down and put my nose on the ground and went to sleep.

"Philip came out and saw me lying there—Philip is very kind—and he told Sophocles not to plow me any more. Come home with me."

But Sorrel shook his head.

"I am afraid to come now," he answered. "Some time, perhaps, I may."

He lowered his head and looked with frightened eyes at Judge and Sam, who were coming across the field.

"Do not be afraid," said Jerry; "these are our boys coming for us."

"I do not want any one to know where I am," answered Sorrel, retreating farther into the thicket. "Do not mention that you have seen me."

CHAPTER VIII

WILFRED SAILS FOR INDIA

"India is so far away! Must you go, Wilfred?"

Eva's eyes filled with tears and a feeling of dread crept into her timid heart. She drew closer to her husband and put her hand upon his arm.

"It is necessary, Eva. Uncle Horace needs me and I cannot refuse his earnest request to come to him. His physician writes that he can live only a few months. If he can stand the journey I shall bring him home with me. I must go at once; the *Semiramis* leaves Mobile for Bombay Monday and I shall sail in her."

"So soon!" cried Eva. "Why, how can you get ready for so long a journey in such a short time?"

"If you will be a brave little woman and pack my valise, I can be ready by to-morrow to travel around the world," said Wilfred. "You remember I have crossed the Atlantic many times, and I spent three years sailing on the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean."

"I am aware of that," returned Eva, "and I know, too, that Jenny Seymour does not fear the sea more than I. If every one felt as we do there would be no communication between the Old and New World. I shall not know a moment's peace, dear, until you are home again."

"What will become of your business while you are away, Wilfred?"

"When I got this letter this morning," he answered, "I called on Charley Dalton and turned my clients over to him; my business affairs are in safe hands. My only anxiety is on Eugene's account. He is so frail that I do not like to leave him; however, Philip assures me that he is not any more delicate than many children of precocious intellect, and he has promised to see him as often as possible in my absence. Can you and Valerie and the children go with me to Mobile to-morrow evening and stay until the vessel sails? She leaves Monday, and you can come home on the evening train or wait until Tuesday. Philip Stanley is going down for a day with Seymour and he will see that you get back home safely."

"Oh, yes," said Eva, smiling, although the tears were very near. "And, Wilfred, dear, if you don't mind I shall send a note asking Jenny Seymour to go with us. I know she wants to see her brother."

"Do so, by all means," answered Wilfred. "But instead of writing a note, you might drive over and see her."

"No," said Eva; "I cannot. I must see to the packing of a trunk, which I shall substitute for that valise of yours."

She sat down by her desk and wrote the note, which Wilfred gave to Judge to deliver. Then she left the room and went up-stairs where Aunt Patty was trying in vain to coax Baby Eva, who had just

awakened from her afternoon nap, to have her hair combed.

The little girl ran to her mother and hid her curly head in her dress.

Aunt Patty laughed.

"Jest look at dat, now," she said. "Er body mout think I combed hard ernuff ter hu't. But sholy I don' pull her cyurly hair hardly none."

Eva sat down and raised the child to her lap.

"Never mind her hair now, Mammy," she said. "I want you to tell Uncle Jasper to go to the attic and bring me his master's traveling-trunk."

"Yes, honey, I'll go. But hadn' I better tell Bre'r Jasper to brush de dus' offen it 'fore he fetches it in here?"

"Yes, you may tell him to dust it."

Aunt Patty laid the brush and comb on the dressing-table and left the room.

"If it is true," thought Eva, "that coming events cast their shadows before, there is sorrow in store for me."

She sat there, her heart heavy with forebodings, until Aunt Patty returned, followed by Uncle Jasper with the trunk on his shoulder; he put it on the floor and stood waiting for further directions.

"That will do," said the lady; "you may go now. And, Mammy, you may take Eva away; I have some packing to do."

"I don't want my hair pulled," said the little girl, drawing back as the nurse took her in her arms. "I

want to go with 'Gene and Bertie to feed the fish and see the pitty f'owers in the water."

"We is ergoin', sugar, jest es soon es I ties on yer white sunbunnit. Is it true, Missy, that Marse Wilfred is gwine ere way ter dat furen country?" she asked.

"It is quite true," answered Eva; "he leaves home to-morrow evening. I do not know when he will return; he may be away for weeks—perhaps months."

"The time ov his home-comin' is onsettled," said Aunt Patty, "but don' yer feel downhearted, honey; many folkses what goes ter savage lan's comes back."

"India isn't a savage country, Mammy," said Eva, repressing a smile. "The Hindoos are an educated and enlightened people."

"Oh, no, honey!—'scuse me fer differin' wid yer, but I has knowed many hoodoos en dey ain' ter be trus'ed." She took the little girl by the hand and led her from the room.

Eva arose and began packing Wilfred's trunk with everything she imagined he would need during a prolonged absence. When she finished and went down-stairs she found Philip and Jenny Seymour, with Charley Dalton, on the veranda. They were out for an afternoon ride and were on the way to Lakeview to get Valerie to accompany them when they met Judge with the note for Jenny. Her eyes sparkled when she read it.

"How thoughtful Mrs. Lake is," she said to her companions.

And one of them would have given much could any words or deeds of his have brought that charming glow to her cheek.

Jenny's school would open in two weeks. The pleasant summer would soon be but a memory, and the school-room and work time were drawing nearer. Mrs. Stanley had planned this afternoon ride; she had not yet banished her cherished dream from her heart. Although she would not have had her idolized son be guilty of a dishonorable act, yet she clung to the hope that Valerie, who was young and inexperienced and who possibly did not know her own mind, might tire of their long betrothal and release Philip. Her feelings on this subject were not prompted by any dislike for Valerie. The mother acknowledged that she was far more beautiful and intellectual than Jenny; in fact, she knew that Valerie surpassed any young girl of her wide circle of acquaintances. She simply wanted, as so many mothers do, to help select a wife for her son.

Eva raised her hands when Philip asked where Valerie was.

"What a useless question, Philip," she said. "Valerie is oftener in the garden than anywhere else; you will find her there now. She will never be a snowdrop or white violet, but she may some day be changed by the fairies into a crimson rose."

Philip laughed and went to meet Valerie, who had seen them coming and was returning to the house.

"We want you to ride with us, Queen of the Gar-

den, and loveliest flower of the garden of roses and girls," he said, baring his head before her.

She answered the gay words gravely; she did not like to hear the plurals "we" and "us." She would go with them, she said, and went to change her white muslin for a navy-blue habit.

"Philip will want to ride with Jenny," she thought, as she stood before the mirror putting the finishing touches to her toilet, "And in any case I shall ride with my Cousin Charley."

She drew on her gloves and went down to the veranda, where they awaited her. Uncle Jasper stood at the gate holding her horse by the bridle. Affecting not to see Philip's motion to come to her, she made a jesture to Charley Dalton, summoning him to her side, and together they led the way to the gate.

Dalton assisted Valerie to the saddle, and with a challenge to Philip and Jenny they rode away.

Philip's eyes opened a trifle wider when Valerie passed him; then with a smile he turned to Jenny and followed her. The rumors which Mrs. Grundy had circulated regarding himself and Jenny Seymour had reached him. Still he was at a loss to understand Valerie's manner to him.

"If I did not know that such a feeling has no place in her heart I should say she has heard that silly rumor and allowed it to make her just a little unreasonable and jealous. I am tempted to find out; the child should not so quickly doubt me."

For the time he forgot that playing with edged

tools is dangerous pastime and exerted himself to make the ride a pleasant one for Jenny. On their return, Doctor Stanley and Miss Seymour led the way. Philip took care that they were not out of sight of Valerie and Charley. His eyes were brimming with reckless fun; he wanted Valerie to see how attentive he was to Jenny. She did see and her cheeks burned.

However, when they stopped at Lakeview, Philip, quicker than Charley Dalton, sprang from his horse and lifted Valerie from the saddle.

"What is it, Queen Rosebud," he whispered. "Don't let a shadow grow between us. If I come this evening will you tell me?"

She raised her soft black eyes to the blue ones above her. The afternoon breeze had been playing with her hair and it lay in ringlets on her white brow; the roses bloomed and faded in her cheeks.

"There is nothing the matter," she answered, "and I shall be—" she hesitated—"I shall be engaged this evening."

Philip's hand closed over her's a moment, then he released it.

"As you please," he said, and mounting his horse he raised his hat and joined Jenny and Charley, who were waiting for him. He rode with them until they passed out of the private grounds.

"I must go another way," he said; "you will ride on."

He wanted to be alone; he had not cared for the ride this evening, but his mother wished him to go

and he had yielded only to wound Valerie and make himself miserable for a time.

"What had I done," he thought, "that she should have passed me with barely a word? She knows I must pay some attention to my mother's guest. If she had not led the way I would not have followed. I wish the child did not love me so passionately; I am not worthy of such devotion."

Valerie ran to her room and burst into a storm of tears.

" 'If I come this evening,' " she repeated. "That implied doubt. Why did he not say he 'would come' if he cared to. O Philip, Philip! you are drifting from me. But I shall not cry about it," she said, resolutely brushing the tears from her long lashes. "I shall not wear my heart upon my sleeve. Pride is quite as strong as love."

Very true, Valerie, as many aching hearts can testify!

Charley Dalton left Jenny at the door and went to his office. He came again in the evening, bringing Mrs. Stanley one of the new books.

"I want you to read it," he said, "and tell me what you think of 'Horatio Layton,' the hero.

"I have read the book," said Philip, who was feeling somewhat cynical, "and I do not believe any man with a well-balanced mind would have left his home and country because the lady he loved dismissed him and married his rival."

"Neither do I," agreed Charley. "Such love is found only in books. Now, I am to be married in

three weeks and I don't mind admitting that I will not tramp through foreign wilds and jungles if Lily—"

Mrs. Stanley looked at him and smiled. There was an expression in her eyes that made him flush.

"Philip, confess," she said to her son; "I want to know what you would do."

"I believe," said Philip, "that I can love as devotedly as any man ever did; but if I am so unfortunate as to be treated as 'Horatio Layton' was I shall not rush off to the ends of the earth in search of hearts-ease—I'll find it at home or do without."

The next afternoon Wilfred Lake, with his family, came to Oakland; Charley Dalton was waiting at the station for them, and soon Jenny and Philip arrived. The train was on time and at eight o'clock they went on board. Uncle Jasper and Judge followed with the luggage; they found places for it, and Uncle Jasper made a solemn adieu to his master, and passed on to the window, where Aunt Patty was sitting with Baby Eva on her lap, and Judge by her side. Eugene and Bertram occupied the seat in front of them.

"Dis 'rangement don' suit me," said Uncle Jasper, "Bertie is apt ter pitch outen de winder; you come here, Jedge, en set nex' him en put 'Gene by Sis Patty. Now dat's better, en I'll be er goin'. Good-by, Sis Patty. Teck keer ov yerse'f, Jedge, en don' git in ter trubble 'twixt dis en Chuesday."

"I'll do ter trust, daddy," returned Judge, and before the train began to move the old man hurried off.

Philip had no time for a word with Valerie.

"I'll be in the city Monday morning," he was saying when the bell began to ring.

"And I should like to say a word to Seymour, too," said Charley Dalton, "so I'll come with Philip." And as the wheels began to revolve they sprang off.

The train reached the beautiful "Gulf City" at half-past eight the next morning, and the Lakes, with Jenny, went to the Merton Hotel and had breakfast. Two hours later they drove to the wharf where the *Semiramis* lay at anchor.

Wilfred and Valerie, after much persuasion, had induced Eva and Jenny to go with them on board the vessel.

"I suppose I am a coward, Wilfred," said Eva, when she refused to allow the children to come. "The little ones are safer here at the hotel with Mammy and Judge."

"I was never on the ocean in my life," said Jenny. "The water fascinates and at the same time repels me. I believe I shall never have courage to sail out of sight of land."

"You and Eva, Miss Seymour, need have no fear to-day," said Wilfred. "The *Semiramis* is safely anchored and cannot break away and take you to the Gulf. Get a little courage from this sister of mine," he added, with an affectionate glance at Valerie. "Why, this morning she asked me to let her go to India with me."

"Oh Valerie!" exclaimed Jenny, "how could you dream of such a thing."

Valerie smiled.

"I wanted to go," she said; "but Wilfred says I must not."

The carriage stopped at the wharf and they went on board the vessel. Seymour, sun-browned and ruddy, met them, and went with them over the ship, pointing out every object of interest. They stayed two hours, then returned to the hotel in time for dinner, Seymour promising to join them in the evening.

The children were playing about the room when Wilfred and Eva came in.

"Father," said Bertram, "do tigers grow in India?"

"Yes, tigers grow in India," answered Wilfred; "but why do you ask?"

"Will you do sumfin' for me, father?"

"Certainly. Tell me what you want."

"When you come home bring me a striped tiger like this picture to play with Mitts." And he held up a book with a picture of a young tiger.

Wilfred laughed.

"If I catch a tiger," he said, "I will bring it with me."

"Tigers and dogs do not play together," said Eugene; "but Bertie is small and does not know any better."

"What shall I bring you, Eugene?" asked his father, lifting him to his knee.

Eugene folded his small hands and looked up wistfully.

"I do not want anything," he said. "Only come back soon, father; I shall miss you at the lake when we sail our boats—I shall miss you everywhere. You will come?"

"Just as soon as Uncle Horace is better, Eugene." He put his arms around the little boy and held him close.

Sunday morning Wilfred and the three ladies, with Captain Seymour, went to Trinity Church to hear Bishop Hilmer, and the remainder of the day they spent in their private parlor.

Judge met an acquaintance of his in the kitchen and asked for permission to spend the three nights of his stay in the city with him. The request was granted, and after their work was done they went to Tom's home. It was Saturday night and they went to church, where a "feast in the wilderness" was in progress; it was nearly morning when they got back home. And the next day they went to the "grand rally," which continued nearly all Sunday night.

It is small wonder that Judge was tired and sleepy Monday morning.

"Young folkses suttenly has er hard time," he muttered as he helped the express man take his master's luggage to the cab which waited at the door to convey it to the vessel. "Monday ain' no fittin' day ter start on er journey," he said to himself. "Ef I had de fixin' ov things I'd let de young folkses have mos' all day Monday ter sleep en res'; dey needs it

ter cupperate f'um de 'fects ov der juties ov Sad'day night en Sunday en Sunday night twell most day. I can't har'ly keep my eyes open en my hands er movin'. Atter I gits th'ough wiff de business fer Marse Wilfred I mus' sleep er quarter ov er hour—I kin do it en wake up long 'fore it's time fer de boat ter sail."

He went on board the *Semiramis* with the baggage and put it in Wilfred's stateroom.

"Now I mus' fin' er kum-fer-ter-ble place ter res'."

He was not long in finding a place which suited him; he laid down and fell asleep—it was far in the night when he awoke.

Philip and Charley Dalton came in on the morning train. Dalton went to the hotel and Philip drove directly to the *Semiramis.*

"How good of you to come to see me off," said Seymour, giving Philip both his hands.

"How long will you be away?" asked Philip as they walked about the deck.

"Eighteen months—possibly two years," was the answer.

"Don't think I am inquisitive, Roger, but I should like to know—if you do not mind telling me—if that affair of the heart you hinted of the day you left Oakland is still giving you pain."

"Philip, I trust you will speedily forget what I am going to tell you. While I was in Oakland I met a fair-haired, hazel-eyed girl; I knew she was not free else I might have lost my heart to her—perhaps I did. Now don't think I am fickle. When she left

the city my heart turned in another direction and I was becoming infatuated with the loveliest girl in twenty States. I was adoring a beautiful, unattainable star. There is only one man in the world worthy to win her, and you are that man. I did not know that you cared for her until you told me that evening in my room, and I ran away the next day.

"I have met her here and I find the dream has passed and left no pain. But the hazel eyes disturb me yet."

"One more thing," said Philip. "Her name?"

Seymour hesitated, then breathed a name in so low a tone that only Philip heard it.

"Roger!" he exclaimed, "why did you not tell me this before you left Oakland? I am sure I could have helped you then, and another also. I fear it is too late now."

"Yes," returned Seymour, "it is too late."

At ten o'clock Wilfred and Eva, with the children, drove to the wharf; they were followed by Charley Dalton with Valerie and Jenny in another carriage. Then came the porter with Mammy, who was to help with the children; they had begged to go on the vessel with their father and Eva could not refuse them.

Judge was to have taken Aunt Patty, but when the hour for leaving arrived he could not be found. The old woman searched and made inquiry for him, but in vain.

"He's ersleep summers," she said, "and I won' bother Marse Wilfred erbout 'im now. Tom kin 'company me."

When the sailors began to haul in the anchor the visitors left the ship and returned to their carriages, where they waited until the *Semiramis* slowly left the wharf and glided down the bay.

Wilfred watched them from the deck until the faces faded from his sight.

He had heard no approaching footsteps, and when he turned quickly no one was near him, yet a voice had distinctly spoken the words:

"Remember the fate of unhappy Enoch Arden."

CHAPTER IX

ON THE BAY

"It is a lovely afternoon for a ride down the bay," said Philip to Valerie and Jenny, when they were once more at the hotel. "I have secured a boat from a fisherman whom I know well—"

"O Philip!" exclaimed Eva, "surely you are not going on the bay in a fish-boat."

Philip smiled.

"Holton keeps this boat, Eva," he said, "for the use of pleasure-seekers. He assures me it is perfectly seaworthy, and Dalton and I have been expert oarsmen; we can manage a boat yet. Will you come? There is not the slightest danger," he added to Jenny, who was afraid and did not hesitate to say so. At last she consented, on condition that they would not go out of sight of land.

Valerie readily consented. She loved the water and could manage a small boat as well as Philip, with whom she often rowed on the river in her own boat, the "Pond Lily."

"Come back in time to take the train for Oakland," called Eva, when they were leaving.

"We will be on time; will be here by five o'clock," answered Charley Dalton.

"That will be quite early enough," returned Eva. "Come in," she said in answer to a knock at the

door; and Aunt Patty came in with Baby Eva. Her usually placid face wore a troubled look.

"Ef yer please, honey," she said, "dat boy Jedge ain' bin foun' yit."

"Not found!" exclaimed Eva; "why, I did not know he was lost. What do you mean, Mammy?"

" 'Scuse me fer not tellin' yer sooner, Miss Eva, but I didn' want ter 'sturb yer dis mawnin'. Fact is, Jedge wer'n't yere w'en us all went ter de boat wid Marse Wilfred, en I had ter git Tom ter go in his stead. I jest know he's ersleep summers—but whey is more dan I know. He ain' in dis house nowheys, en he ain' at Tom's home neider, 'cause I sont dere ter fin' out."

"Oh, he will certainly be here soon," said Eva. "He cannot sleep all day."

"But he kin come es nigh it es de nex' one," Aunt Patty thought as she left the room with her charge.

Meanwhile, the four young people went on to the place where a fisherman was standing under the slender branches of a giant drooping willow by a small boat that rocked on the water.

"The boat is so small and unsteady," whispered Jenny to Valerie, "I fear it is not safe to go on the water in it."

"You feel timid now," said Valerie, with a smile, "but I dare say after the first venture you will be as enthusiastic about boat-riding as I am."

The fisherman, reading something of Jenny's feelings from the expression of her face, said to Philip:

"The 'Mary Belle' is the staunchest boat of her

size that rides across the bay, Captain; all you have to do is to keep her well-balanced and steady."

They assisted the girls in, and Philip and Charley followed; they took the oars, and as they dipped them in the water the boat glided slowly over the unruffled surface. The experience was novel and delightful to Jenny. Quickly the hours passed away, until the lowering sun warned them that it was time to return.

Philip, who was rowing, noticed with alarm a small white cloud grow in the southwest; it seemed to rise out of the water at the point where the drooping sky and rising water met. Valerie, too, saw the cloud and knew it was the forerunner of a storm.

"Take this oar," she said to Charley Dalton, who was sitting by her side, "and see how quickly we can reach the shore."

"It is early yet," said Charley; "we can get back to the hotel easily by five."

"Perhaps," answered Valerie, looking straight into his eyes, then back to the cloud, which momentarily grew larger and darker. His gaze followed hers, then he began to row with all his strength, and the boat rushed over the water.

Philip was afraid that Jenny would spring to her feet and throw them into the water if the storm struck them before they reached the shore. He knew Valerie would not, so he said to Jenny very quietly:

"Miss Seymour, Dalton and I are going to make a race to reach the shore in a few minutes; we want you and Valerie to sit perfectly still."

Jenny, unconscious of the coming storm, gave the required promise.

While they were yet two hundred yards from land a low, moaning sound wailed across the water. At the same moment a fierce gust of wind struck them. Jenny involuntarily sprang to her feet. The sudden, uneven motion made the boat rock violently, and she lost her balance and went over the side; the boat turned over and all were thrown into the water.

"Oh! save me, save me!" cried Jenny as the water closed over her. She rose the next instant and clutched Charley Dalton, who was nearest her, in a vise-like grasp. She held his arms and he could not swim. He was helpless in the water, and both would surely be drowned if he could not induce her to loosen her grasp.

It was in vain that he entreated and commanded her to release his arms; she clung to him as to her only hope of life.

When Valerie was thrown into the water she sank, and when she rose again the boat was close to her and between her and her companions. She swam to it, and holding to the side with both hands drifted with it. Philip saw her and tried to get to her, but the boat drifted faster than he could swim.

Charley Dalton knew he was powerless to help his drowning companion; he could not unclasp her hands, and called to Philip:

"We are drowning, Philip!" he shouted. "Can you help me?"

It had not been five minutes since the storm struck them. It had passed and the sun was shining again.

Philip looked around when Charley called; his face went white as the foam that flashed on the water. He could not overtake the drifting boat. His friends were drowning before his eyes. Must he leave Valerie and go to them? With a wild prayer that she would cling to the boat until help came he turned and swam to Dalton, who was sinking lower and lower.

He caught hold of Jenny and tried to open her hands, but he could not. Then he fastened his fingers in Charley's collar.

"Now," he said, "when I pull, lift your arms as much as you can and slip out of your coat. I'll not let the lady sink."

When Jenny felt her support giving way she fainted.

"Put one arm around her," commanded Philip, "and hold one end of this coat with the other hand and I will tow you. Be alive, man; we must get out of this!"

The fisherman who owned the boat had returned to the beach to meet the pleasure-seekers when they came ashore, and make his boat fast. He was standing under the willow when the small white cloud rose; he watched it as it grew darker.

"There'll be a capful of wind," he said, "but it won't last long."

He watched the boat as it flew over the water.

"They ain't in any danger, unless that timid girl

gets skeered and upsets the boat. The other is a brave one; she won't."

"Glory! if she ain't done it!" he exclaimed when Jenny sprang up and the boat went over. Running down the beach a hundred yards, where another boat was tied, he cut the rope, and springing in began rowing with all the strength of his powerful muscles to the boat where Valerie was clinging almost exhausted.

"Hold on a minute longer, lady; I'll save you!" he shouted.

The voice reached her. It was the first sound she had heard since the boat began to drift from her companions. She was in an agony of doubt as to their fate. She knew Philip could swim, yet he had not come to her.

"Oh! it must be that he cannot," she thought. "They have all gone down: Philip and handsome Charley Dalton, for whom Lily would wait in vain; and gentle Jenny Seymour, too!"

The roses had faded from her cheeks and palest of lilies bloomed. She was so weary; she felt that she could not cling to the boat longer.

"I am selfish to cling to this place of safety," she said. "I will go back and help my friends!"

Her fingers slipped off and she turned to see the three coming toward her. At the same moment the cheery call sounded again. Help was near. Two hands clasped her arms and she was lifted out of the water and into the boat, which the fisherman caught and held.

"Why did you let the boat go, lady? Couldn't you hold to it a little while longer?"

"I was going to my friends," she answered.

Her rescuer looked at her admiringly.

"You are a brave one, young lady," he said. "Can you row?"

"Yes," answered Valerie. "Oh! tell me if my friends are safe."

"They are safe—leastways, they ain't drownded. Did neither of the gentlemen try to help you?" he asked. "Seems lack one ought to have been here."

The words sent a chill through Valerie.

"My friend cannot swim; she needed them more than I. Are you not going to them?" she cried.

"Right away; if you can row, go to the beach; you will find help there. You are a brave one."

He left her and went to her companions. He steadied the boat and Philip and Dalton lifted Jenny, who was still unconscious, into it, then they climbed in. Philip took the oars and helped row.

A crowd had gathered on the beach. Some one had hurried away for a cab, which drove up as Valerie's boat glided into shallow water and stopped. The other boat, rowed by two pair of strong arms, had passed Valerie. Philip sprang out, and lifting her in his arms waded with her to the shore.

"My darling," he whispered, his voice tremulous, "you know I tried to get to you, do you not? The boat drifted so fast I could not overtake it; Dalton and Miss Seymour were drowning—they were nearest me and I helped them. Do you blame me?"

"Oh, no," she answered; "you could have done nothing else."

He looked into her eyes and smiled.

"I knew you would understand. Now say you forgive me for vexing you the afternoon we were riding. What had I done before that day to make you coldly pass me and go with Dalton?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she said. "Please put me in the cab and go back to Jenny; she needs you."

Although she spoke so quietly, her heart was almost breaking. Philip had forgotten her in the moment of greatest peril and gone to the rescue of Jenny. She thought, "Surely love must have prompted him."

She was no longer the loving, trusting child who stood in the vine-clad summer-house when the yellow jasmine was blooming, the golden bells touching her hair. She was a woman now, and pride and jealousy had been planted in her heart and were growing. Would they accomplish their allotted work?

Jenny had revived when Philip got back to the boat, and Dalton was chafing her hands.

"You are safe now, Miss Seymour," he said, "and we will get you to the hotel in a few minutes."

"Oh! the water; the cruel water!" she gasped, starting up. "Valerie! tell me of Valerie—"

"She is in the cab waiting for you. Come. Can you walk? Lean on me."

They got her to the cab and helped her in. Before

the door was closed the fisherman who rescued them looked in.

"Lady," he said to Valerie, "if you ever need a friend, remember Amos Holton and his wife; there's nothing they wouldn't do for you."

She smiled and thanked him; the door closed and Philip sprang up by the driver.

"If you get to the Merton Hotel in ten minutes," he said, "I will give you ten dollars."

"All right, Captain; consider yerse'f there." And they rapidly drove away. Charley Dalton followed in another cab; when they stopped at the door, Bertram was looking out of the window.

"O mother!" he called in a high voice, "look at Cousin Philip and Valerie and Jenny. It's been raining outdoors and they are as wet as Mitts when he swims in the lake!"

Eva ran to the window.

"Mammy," she cried, "they have been overturned in the bay and are almost drowned! Why will people go on the treacherous water! Send Judge for some of the servants and call the landlady."

"Very well, Miss Eva; I'll call de lady en de servants, too. Jedge ain' come in yit."

Eva caught up two long cloaks which were lying across a chair, and running down-stairs folded them around Valerie and Jenny.

"That is right," said Philip; "now get them to a fire as quickly as possible. And, Eva, you cannot go to Oakland to-night. Valerie and Miss Seymour must rest."

Then he gave some directions to the landlady, who had come to them, and with Charley Dalton went to the Gifford House.

Some hours later Doctor Stanley called at the hotel, and Aunt Patty met him.

"De ladies hev recovered f'um de shock ov de 'mersion en is restin' in dere rooms," she told him. "Marse Philip," she said when he was leaving the room, "ef yer please, I'm needin' er leetle he'p."

Philip stopped.

"What is the matter, Mammy?" he asked. "Is it the fever and ague again?"

"No, son," she answered, "I'm well in he'f; it's my min' what's trubblin' me now. Dat boy Jedge is missin'; he's been erway sence soon dis mawnin'. I tol' Miss Eva he wus 'sleep summers, but I'm 'ginnin' ter have doubts. He orter waked en come back 'fore dis time. I'm 'feared he's been robbed."

"Why," exclaimed Philip, "did he have much money in his pocket?"

"Nary cent, honey. All de same, I'm 'feared he's been robbed, en I t'ought I'd tell yer so es yer could he'p us."

"Quite right," said Philip; "I will see to him in the morning." And he went away to his room in the Gifford House.

Charley Dalton did not leave his room that evening; he had learned a bitter lesson while struggling in the water and he walked the floor the live-long night.

The next afternoon Eva and her party left Mobile

for home. Judge was still missing, and she left money with the hotel clerk to pay her servant's passage to Oakland. Philip notified the police and the search for him began.

When Eva got home she sent for Uncle Jasper and Aunt Phebe and told them about Judge; she had hoped to find him at home but he had not arrived. The days lengthened into weeks and no tidings came from Judge Dan'el Jackson.

"Sis Patty heered me er cautionin' dat boy not ter git inter no trubble," said Uncle Jasper; "I'll 'press de lesson when he gits here." The weeks changed into months and the months were lost in years before the opportunity came.

When Charley Dalton left the train he went directly to his office, where he found a letter from Lily Gray awaiting him.

CHAPTER X

CHARLEY AND LILY

It was lying on a pile of law books on the table, this letter from Lily Gray, the girl he was pledged to lead to the altar in three weeks. Dalton's face turned pale when he saw it as he stepped across the threshold; he took it in his hand. His fingers trembled around the seal but he did not break it. He turned it over and read the address again, the letters dancing before his eyes.

"I cannot read it now," he said, and slipped it in his pocket. He sat down by the open window and bowed his head upon his clasped hands. Charley Dalton was miserable. He told himself again and again that he was the most unhappy mortal on earth.

"How could I have been so blind?" he cried. "I never dreamed of this. If I had not gone on the bay that fateful day I might never have known and this sorrow would have been spared me. But my duty is plain—I will not shrink from it, and no one shall ever know."

The little brown sparrows nesting in the elm trees whose branches brushed his window seemed to divine something of his sorrows, and began to sing their sweetest songs to cheer him. But the melody was lost for him; he paid no heed to it—he did not hear it.

And yet no good deed, no kind and thoughtful act, no single note of even the least of the song birds is ever lost. A sick child, lying on his bed in the room below the office, with the sunshine wavering on the floor as it fell through the leaves of the elm, had been weary and restless all night; he heard the song of the birds and his spirit was soothed. He lay still and listened, and as he listened the song seemed to grow softer and sweeter. The restlessness slowly left him, and with a smile wreathing his pale lips, "tired eye-lids closed over tired eyes" and he slept, to dream of green meadows and runnings brooks and blooming flowers.

Charley Dalton sat lost in bitter reflections until aroused by a knock at the door; he raised his head and bade the visitor enter. All trace of emotion vanished and he at once became the calm, collected man of business. The morning passed and he found no time to read Lily's letter. His dinner-hour arrived and he remembered that he had had no breakfast. He closed his office and walked two blocks to the boarding-house where he took his meals.

He had to cross the railroad track, and as he was nearing it the train passed by. He saw the faces of the passengers turned to the windows; some weary and dusty, others fresh and expectant.

The engineer, covered with coal dust, sat motionless in his cab, his steady hand ready for instant and lightning-like work. He saw the fireman, blackened and grimy, feeding the hungry furnace.

He watched the train as it slowed down, stopping

two short minutes at the station, then the bell began to turn with a penetrating, clanging sound, and it moved on to Marsville. Dalton crossed the track, and with a last backward glance at the train and a half-formed wish that he was on board it, he went to dinner.

"How pale you are, Mr. Dalton!" exclaimed the landlady, an elderly, motherly woman; "you are ill. You have had no breakfast. I kept it warm and waiting for you two hours, and it is now long past your dinner-hour."

"I am not ill, Mrs. Granby," he replied, "and you were very kind to think of me at breakfast."

He went to his room after dinner, and moving a chair to a table covered with papers, he drew Lily's letter from his pocket. He did not linger over it as he had done in the morning, but broke the seal at once and began to read it. It was dated Saturday afternoon, and contained but a few lines:

"Charley, dear," it began, "I want you to come to Marsville Monday. I have something to say to you —something I do not care to write. Mama says the cards must be issued early next week and I must see you before that time. You should get this letter to-morrow afternoon and can leave Oakland by the Monday morning train."

"I am unhappy, dear. Mama and Dora do not know, and I cannot tell them. I look to you to bring me peace. Come.

"Lovingly, LILY."

The letter dropped from his fingers and fluttered to the floor. A white kitten lying on the sofa, feigning sleep, saw it, and leaping to it began tossing it with his soft paws.

Dalton stopped and picked up the letter, returning it to his pocket.

"What does it mean?" he thought. "What can have made her unhappy? It is impossible that she has learned— No, no! I, only, know that."

" 'Come Monday,' " he continued, "and Monday I was in Mobile Bay, battling with the water for my life, when I should have been here. What can Lily have to tell me?"

The questions followed each other in quick succession, but he could find no answer to them and had to content himself with conjecture.

"If I had read the letter when I came in this morning I could have gone out on the train which has just passed. Now I must wait until morning, and instead of going to Marsville Monday it will be Thursday afternoon when I arrive."

The longest day and weariest waiting will end; a new day will dawn, bringing renewed hope, or adding weight to sorrow.

Charley Dalton left Oakland on the east-bound train the next morning, and after a ten-hour ride arrived in Marsville and went to Mrs. Gray's home.

Lily was sitting under a mimosa tree, the low-hanging branches and large, lace-like leaves almost touching the ground and closing out the fierce afternoon sun. Her head was bowed, her hands folded

idly on her lap, her attitude listless and dejected. It was thus that Dalton found her. The soft carpet of grass deadened the sound of his footsteps and he stood by her side before she was aware of his presence.

"O Charley!" she cried, springing up, "you have come at last! I have waited so impatiently for you since Monday, and now that you are here I scarcely know how to begin to tell you that which I want you to know. No, Charley, dear," she said, drawing away from the caress he would have given her, "do not kiss me yet; wait until I have told you why I sent for you."

Dalton, much perplexed by her words, sat down by her side and took her hands.

"What is it?" he asked gravely. "Have I done anything to make you unhappy?"

"Oh, no, Charley," she answered quickly; "the fault is mine." She buried her face in her hands and wept. The sunbeams playing hide and seek among the moving leaves threw shadows on her hair. A humming-bird searching among the long seed pods for a late honey-sweet blossom darted among the branches.

Charley watched the weeping girl and a wild hope sprang up in his heart. His face alternately flushed and paled.

"What is it, Lily, dear?" he asked again.

She bravely raised her head and answered him:

"Charley," she said, "I hope I shall not give you pain, but I know it is best to tell you now before it is

too late. I do not love you in the way I thought I did. I regard you as I might a dear brother had I possessed one."

"Lily!" he cried in amazement, "do you know what you are telling me? Do you forget that we are to be married in three weeks?"

"It is true, Charley," she said brokenly. "I have been battling with this feeling for weeks. I thought the old love would come back, but I find it does not, and it is best that you should know, and your letters, Charley, have helped me, have given me courage to tell you. I know you do not love me as you did six months ago. I do not blame you, dear," she said quickly, when he would have vehemently denied the assertion, for he felt at this moment the old affection grow warmer and the later summer dream fade. She laid her fingers on his lips and would not let him speak.

"Our love has changed to friendship; and friendship warm, true, and lasting it will remain. Some day you will meet the woman whom you will love, and, oh! how miserable you and I would be if you were not free—if duty without love bound you to me.

"And so, Charley, I have decided, and I believe you will agree with me, that you must in future be my brother and I will be a loving sister to you."

She slipped the ring off her finger and laid it in his hand.

Dalton was silent many moments, his heart filled with conflicting emotions. Yesterday he would have welcomed his release from an engagement

which had, in a moment, become a heavy yoke to bear. But to-day, when it was offered to him, when Lily sat by his side, when he looked into her eyes something of the old tenderness returned.

"O Lily!" he cried, "I am sure that I love you to-day, although I cannot say that my heart has not wandered from you, my first love; but I did not know it, dear, until four days ago, and if my letters have grown cold I was not conscious of the change. We will forget this—"

"It cannot be, Charley," she quickly interrupted him.

"Is not our appointed wedding day too near for you to cast me off in this way?" he asked.

"Why, Charley," she exclaimed, the tears gathering in her eyes, "you must know it is for the happiness of both! I thought you would see, as I do, that it is best. Still, I will not break our engagement without your consent, and if you wish I will keep the promise given you, although I do not love you as I once did."

Dalton's face softened; he raised her hand to his lips.

"It is enough, dear," he said. "It shall be as you wish. Have the cards been issued?"

"Not yet; when you did not come Monday I begged mama to wait a few days longer. I felt that I must see you before that was done."

"Then your mother knows and approves of your —of our wish to end the engagement?"

"Indeed she does not, Charley! I would tell no

one before consulting you. But I must let her know this afternoon. Poor mama! She will be so disappointed, I almost dread to make the confession."

"I will help you, or, if you prefer, I will tell her myself; I will go to her at once," said Charley.

"No, Charley. You must say good-by to me here, and I will tell mama and Dora myself. This is something that you cannot very well do."

Dalton insisted upon accompanying her to her mother and sister; he felt that he would be playing a weak part to go back to Oakland and permit Lily to bear alone the blame, possibly face a storm of censure, from her mother for yielding to what she would term a sentimental whim.

"I know you want to help me, Charley," she said at last. "But do you not see that you cannot in a case like this. There is nothing for you to say to mama; have you thought of that? And you would only be placing yourself in an embarrassing position. Now, bid me good-by and go back to Oakland. And take with you, Charley, dear, a sister's devotion and the hope that you may meet the one woman who, somewhere in the world, is waiting for your coming and the tender love you have never given me."

She raised her face and he kissed her for the last time. The next moment he was gone and she was alone.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHADOW DEEPENS

Philip was in New York. In the evening of the day they returned from Mobile he got a telegram calling him to the city on important business which would detain him several weeks.

One lovely morning late in September, and the day before she was to go to Marsville to attend Dora Gray's wedding, Valerie took a volume of Jean Ingelow's poems from the library table and went to her favorite retreat to read. She turned the leaves listlessly for a while, reading a few stanzas at random as she glanced through the pages. But her thoughts persisted in wandering and she closed the book and laid it on the seat by her side.

> "'And yet no lot below
> For one whole day eludeth care,'"

she repeated. Her eyes had rested on the lines as she turned the leaves.

"A few weeks ago I would not have believed the words true," she thought sadly. But to-day she had more knowledge of the ways of the world—and that knowledge had brought her care. Her path had been strewn with flowers, but the blooms were beginning early to fade and fall, leaving the thorns to wound her; she had been so light-hearted and happy, so en-

tirely free from sorrow, that her short life had been like an entrancing melody. And when love knocked at the door of her heart and entered, the rose-hued clouds deepened and grew yet more beautiful for a time. And then, slowly but surely, as is ever the case, a mist arose and enveloped the bright-colored lights, and tears and rain-drops drew near and yet nearer. It is the common lot, "Into each life some rain must fall." The storms are sure to come. To some few, perhaps, only April showers; but oftener rushing floods.

Some there be who are weak, who have no power to battle with life. Such stoop beneath the first breath of the sobbing wind to be swept onward and lost in an ocean of sorrow. But blest is the one who struggles on with head erect and eyes lifted from the ground, ever looking for the rift in the lowering clouds behind which the sun is still shining.

Valerie was approaching a crisis in her life and she needed, she longed for the tender care and loving counsel of the mother she never knew, and no one could fill that place. Eva, with whom she made her home, was like an elder sister to her; she heard the rumors concerning Philip and Jenny, and although she knew there was no foundation for them, she repeated them to Valerie but said no word to strengthen her faith and trust in Philip's love for her. Nor, to do her justice, did she deem it necessary.

So through the summer days, when her heart was growing heavy, Valerie had smiled and made merry

with the gayest, and no one knew that her heart was a battle-ground where love, pride, and jealousy daily strove for the mastery—though she was as unconscious of the jealousy as if there were no such feeling in the wide world.

"I am sure Philip loves Jenny Seymour," thought Valerie, "else why did he leave me and hasten to rescue her when the storm overturned the boat. Jenny did not need him; Charley Dalton was with her and I was alone. His conduct that day will admit of but one explanation; he no longer cares for me, and is too chivalrous, too honorable to tell me in words. When he returns from New York I will give him his freedom."

Tears obscured her vision, and when she raised her hand to brush them from her long black lashes the dazzling lights emitted by the scintillating opal flashed before her eyes, almost blinding her. In all the months that had passed since it was placed on her finger never had she seen it so changing, so brilliant. She let her hand drop back to her lap and gazed in wonder upon the stone.

There is a belief in omens, a vein of superstition in every one which needs but a word, a touch, a certain gleam of light to be brought into life. It awoke now in Valerie as she watched the flashing lights in the magic opal.

"It is telling me something," she thought. "Oh! if I could only understand its message."

After some moments the wonderful lights faded and it assumed its usual hue.

"My beautiful ring," she murmured. "I have promised Philip that I will never take it from my finger while a ray of love for him remains in my heart, and I cannot break my promise. His fingers must remove it."

She picked up the book again. She did not open it, but sat with her hands clasped around it, her dreamy eyes looking through the open, vine-wreathed door of the summer-house and resting upon the snow-white fields where the plantation negroes, with long osnaburg sacks swung across their shoulders, were picking the cotton. And when their sacks were filled they emptied them in white-oak baskets at the ends of the rows and began to fill them again.

Nearer the house was the vegetable garden, where Aunt Phebe, with a small basket on her arm, was gathering tomatoes for dinner.

And from Aunt Phebe her eyes wandered to the childrens' lake, where Uncle Jasper was patiently thinning out the hyacinths, which were growing so rapidly that they were likely to quite fill the lake and leave no road for the wee sail-boats to cross from one brick shore to the other.

He was not singing to-day, as he so often did when at work. He was thinking sorrowfully of Judge. Nearly three weeks had passed since he went to Mobile with Wilfred Lake, and no tidings had come of him; he had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. The police had failed to find the slightest trace of him, and Eva employed a detective to continue the search; but he,

too, had been unsuccessful and Judge's fate was shrouded in mystery.

"Dat boy tole me he were to be trusted," muttered Uncle Jasper to himself, "en I b'l'eved 'im. I s'pose I orter knowed better; but he had went on journeys erfore en I t'ought he could teck keer ov hisse'f. It must er bin jest lack Sis Patty says—he went ter sleep en sum bad pusson w'at stays in cities robbed en drownded 'im, en left me en he's mammy er sorrowin'. But *ef* he do come home soon en dere ain' been nuffin' de matter 'ceptin' er 'sire ter run er way en see de worl' lack lots ov folkses do, *den* ef I don' meck him dance ter de chune ov er plow-line my name ain't Gineral Jasper Jackson. It's onnateral fer 'im ter go off dis er way soon es ever Marse Wilfred gits outen sight en leave me en hes mammy wid all de wuck ter do, 'sides specelatin' erbout hes comin's en goin's."

He finished thinning out the hyacinths and went to the vineyard to gather hipe scuppernongs.

At last Eugene and Bertram came in search of Valerie, and she went to the house with them. The dressmaker was putting the finishing touches to the costume she was to wear to Dora's wedding and wanted to consult her about the arrangement of the trimming.

"Please do not ask me about it," said the young lady; "you may arrange it to suit yourself."

The dressmaker looked up in some surprise at the indifferent tone, and Valerie smiled.

"I am quite willing that you should use your own

exquisite taste, Mrs. Brantly," she added, and went on to her room.

Tuesday morning, with a party of friends, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Hatton and Jenny Seymour, Valerie went to Marsville. Mrs. Gray's carriage met them at the station and they were driven to her home, where everything was in readiness for the wedding—everything except the bridegroom, who had not arrived. He was to come from New York on the morrow with Philip Stanley, his best man.

Mrs. Gray could not understand why Lily had broken with Charley Dalton. She knew how strict, how almost puritanical were Lily's ideas of truth and honor, and she was perplexed. She could not see how either could have ended the engagement with untarnished honor.

"It must have been by mutual consent," she thought; and as neither cared for any one else, as she believed, they were sure to renew their troth. So she told her friends, who were expecting a double marriage, that Lily and Charley had postponed their wedding-day.

Wednesday morning Philip and Hugh arrived, and with them came Hugh's brother, Jeffrey, and his wife. Margaret Calvert, a refined, graceful woman, had been a schoolmate of Valerie's, though eight years older. They had not met since Margaret left school, which she did when Valerie was fourteen. She was charmed with Valerie, who had grown from a lovely child into a more lovely woman, with wit

and repartee bright and sparkling, but never sharp or unkind, and manner so perfect, so free from affectation that it might have been said of her, as of England's late queen, that she had none, which was the highest compliment that could have been paid to good breeding.

Jeffrey and Margaret Calvert were to leave New York for London the first of October, to be absent until the middle of December, and Margaret determined to invite Valerie to go with them.

At eight o'clock Wednesday evening, September the twenty-sixth, Hugh Calvert and Dora Gray, in the presence of their friends and relatives, breathed the vows which united them "for better, for worse," while life should last.

Philip and Valerie met this evening for the first time since the day of the storm on the bay. A shadow was growing between them. Valerie was offended because Philip went away without calling to see her after their return from Mobile and telling her why he did not come to her assistance when she was in so much peril. It is true, he had explained it to her fully in Mobile, but she wanted to hear the words again. Perhaps she was unreasonable—most women are, so she was not alone. And Philip, for his part, felt that she had received his explanation with coldness and indifference. He was proud, almost as proud as Valerie, who, unknown to herself, or any one, had pride enough in reserve, if it should be awakened, to wreck the happiness of a dozen lives. And when Philip went to New York he wrote to her

only once, a letter which did not reach her, and, consequently, was never answered. They were playing at cross-purposes and sowing seed to reap thorns, as hundreds—thousands—do daily who tenderly love each other.

Valerie, in shimmering white satin, was standing by the open window in the full glare of the lights when Philip, in faultless evening dress, handsome and smiling, approached her, certain of her forgiveness for his unintentional neglect. The color deepened in her cheeks when he bowed before her.

"I claim your hand for the next waltz, Queen Rose-bud," he said, his blue eyes resting on her face.

"I am engaged for the next waltz," she courteously told him.

He took her programme and glanced over it; it was filled; she had not reserved one set for him.

"I regret that I am too late," he said, and as her partner came to claim her, he went to Lily Gray, and together they joined the dancers.

When the music stopped, Valerie slipped away and went into the conservatory, where she found a seat behind banks of green fern and pots of fragrant pink oleanders. All her after-life she remembered the perfume of the oleander. From the band came throbbing strains of music filling the room and floating away on the evening air.

Long and passion-sweet the Blue Danube called, and never again did she hear it without associating it and the exquisite fragrance of the oleander with this evening.

A few minutes after she entered the conservatory Mrs. Gray came in with Mrs. Hatton to show her some rare plants. Valerie drew back behind the leaves. She thought they would go away soon, and she did not want Mrs. Gray to see her. She was weary of the dancing, the lights, and the music, and did not care to return to the ball-room.

She drew a sigh of relief when they passed by without discovering her. They came back in a few moments, however, and paused near her.

"Yes," she heard Mrs. Gray saying, "it is quite evident to every one that they no longer care for each other. They have not danced together a single time to-night. And I am sure you must have noticed how devoted he has been to Miss Seymour. You remember I told you in the spring how that affair would terminate. These extremely handsome, affable men are liable to be fickle, and Doctor Stanley is no exception to the rule. Why, when he was quite young, eighteen or twenty, he was in love with his cousin Eva, who was an orphan and lived with her aunt; Eva told me herself. And Margaret, who knows nothing of his engagement, says he has been very attentive to a lovely New York girl. For my part, I believe Miss Seymour will be the—"

They moved away and Valerie took her fingers from her ears. She had heard the most of what Mrs. Gray said, despite her efforts not to do so. She could not leave her retreat without passing them, so she put her fingers in her ears, but the words still came

to her and she was on the point of starting up when they left the room.

Philip, coming in search of Valerie, had entered the conservatory on the opposite side, and every word spoken by Mrs. Gray had come to him clear and distinct. His face crimsoned and a steely look flashed in his eyes.

"I hope Valerie did not hear the chattering of that lady."

"Magpie" was the word he might have used had he not been too gentlemanly. He saw Valerie where she stood by the oleander and went to her.

"O Philip!" she cried, "you heard what Mrs. Gray said. Is it true?"

"I will make no denial, Valerie," he said gravely and proudly. "I have nothing to say if you doubt me. You must trust me implicitly."

"I understand you!" she said passionately; "you need say no more!"

No one knows all that passed between them; but bitter words were uttered, and the end was that Philip left the house and returned to Oakland by the midnight train, and Valerie, the next morning, went with Margaret Calvert to New York, and three days later stood on the deck of the good ship *Urania,* bound for Liverpool.

Before leaving Marsville she wrote to Eva by the morning's mail, telling her she was going to spend three months in London with her friend Mrs. Calvert, but gave no explanation of her sudden determination to leave home.

"The impulsive child must have quarreled with Philip!" she exclaimed. "Was there ever anything so unfortunate? Philip is so proud, so passionate, that I doubt if he ever comes back to her. It is provoking that two intelligent persons should be so blind, so simple."

When Philip left Marsville he was exasperated that gossiping tongues should so freely criticize him, and indignant that Valerie allowed the idle stories to make her so unreasonable as to break their engagement. It is true he helped her with that. She offered him his freedom and he quickly accepted it and left her. He was angry and he told himself he would not make the first advances toward a reconciliation. The greatest fault was Valerie's.

But after his anger had cooled he reflected that it is a costly thing to ruin the happiness of two lives for a whim; and the afternoon of the fourth day after the scene in Mrs. Gray's conservatory he rode to Oakland determined, if possible, to make up their quarrel. He did not know that Valerie was away.

Bertram, with a serious expression on his usually sunny face, met him at the gate.

"O Cousin Philip, I am so glad you's come!" he cried. "Most everybody's gone from home now. Father and Valerie are gone; Judge is lost and Mitts has hurted one of his feet, and he holds it up when he walks, and Uncle Jasper don't know what to do for him."

"Do you know what is the matter with him and

can you make him well, Cousin Philip?" asked Eugene, who had quietly come to them.

Philip laid his hand on the curly head and smiled.

"Let me see him before I answer you. I cannot make a diagnosis and issue bulletins before I examine my patients."

The little boys led the way and Philip followed to a corner of the yard, where they had their playhouse. Mitts was lying on his bed of straw in a nail keg which was turned on its side; he got up and limped out to meet them.

Philip picked him up and examined him. He found a long, sharp splinter imbedded in the fleshy ball of his foot; the little dog wriggled and yelped, but Philip held him firmly and pulled out the offending splinter. Then he gave him to the boys.

"Take him to Jasper and tell him to bathe the foot in warm water and then put on some of that liniment he has and bind it up. Your dog will be all right in a day or two."

"Dis dawg gits es much 'tention es er human," grumbled Uncle Jasper. But when the helpless animal licked his hand to show his gratitude for what was being done for him, Jasper patted his head and put him gently on the ground when he had made the bandage secure.

Philip hastened to Valerie's bower, certain that he would find her there; but it was empty and he went to the parlor and asked for her. He was told she was not at home; and believing she did not want

to see him he picked up his hat and was leaving the room when Eva entered.

"Sit down, Philip," she said; "I want to talk to you."

Philip bowed and resumed his seat.

"We grew up together like brother and sister," she began, "and for that reason I do not hesitate to speak plainly to you when I want you to tell me anything. I want to know now if you and Valerie have quarreled."

Philip's eye-lids flickered and a slight smile crossed his lips.

"I cannot tell you, Eva," he said quietly. "Had you not best get your information from Valerie?"

"How can I when she is not here?"

"Then she has not returned from Marsville? I thought she came Thursday with Mrs. Hatton."

"But she did not, although she intended doing so when she left home. She sailed from New York yesterday to spend some months in England with the Calverts."

Philip's face betrayed not the slightest degree of surprise, though a fear came to him that their disagreement might grow into something serious. He had not believed she was deeply offended, although she had given him his freedom. He was so sure of her love and forgiveness that he had felt quite equal to the pleasant task of winning the smiles back to her lips. She had not given him their ring, a fact he remembered now, for the first time. And he knew that so long as she wore it on her hand she loved him.

He held her promise that only his fingers should remove it.

"She will not break her promise," he thought, and smiled.

Valerie had given no thought to the opal until one evening when she sat in a steamer chair on board the *Urania.*

"What an exquisitely beautiful opal!" Margaret Calvert had exclaimed. "Just look at the vivid lights, Valerie!"

And Valerie looked and remembered that she should have given it to Philip.

"I cannot send it to him," she thought. "He will understand, and can take it when I return home."

And at that moment, when it was sparkling so brilliantly, Philip was sitting in the parlor at Lakeview, his heart filled with thoughts of her.

"There is nothing for me to tell you, Eva," said Philip at last, and changed the subject by asking if she had had a letter from Wilfred.

But Eva had received no message from her husband; he had promised to write before reaching Bombay if the *Semiramis* met a homeward-bound vessel.

"Perhaps you will get a letter to-morrow," said Philip, and left the house.

Mrs. Stanley's eyes rested anxiously on her son's face that evening as he sat at the supper-table trifling with the meal; but she wisely said nothing until he passed his cup for more tea.

"I fear you are going to be ill, Philip; you had best take a tonic."

But Philip smiled and assured her he never felt better, and pleading important letters to write, went to his room. He sat by his desk until long past midnight writing to Valerie. He burned the pages as fast as they were filled—everything he wrote was either too cold or too passionate to please him. At last he threw the pen down.

"I will not write anything," he said. "I will see her when she returns. I am not to blame for what has happened."

He went to the window and looked out. Clouds obscured the pale light of the stars and a heavy mist was falling.

CHAPTER XII

JUDGE IS FOUND

The search for Judge continued. The money left with the hotel clerk to pay his way to Oakland remained uncalled for. Eva did not believe, as Uncle Jasper and Aunt Phebe so often asserted, that he had run away. He had a good home, with very little work to do and plenty to eat and wear, the latter of first importance with the majority of negroes. He was devoted to Eugene and Bertram, who daily looked for his return.

The detective, after a long search, found the cabman who, with Judge, carried Wilfred Lake's luggage to the *Semiramis* the morning he disappeared. He testified that Judge had been so sleepy on that occasion that he had difficulty in keeping awake until the cab drew up at the wharf. He roused up then, and helped to transfer the luggage to his master's stateroom.

The cabman was of the opinion that he fell from the gangway when leaving the ship and was drowned. This explanation of his disappearance was at last accepted and the matter rested.

Meanwhile, the *Semiramis* left the smooth waters of the bay, glided past Fort Morgan, and entered the Gulf of Mexico.

Wilfred Lake walked the deck for hours thinking of the words so mysteriously whispered to him when

no visible form was near. A premonition of evil oppressed him and he was restless and anxious.

"I wish I did not have to go to India," he said to himself. "I have never before felt so reluctant to leave home; yet I know my family are perfectly safe, and Uncle Horace needs me. No one can help him now as I can and it is my duty to go to him."

About ten o'clock Wilfred went to his stateroom and sat down to read. Suddenly he was disturbed by the sound of heavy breathing and the consciousness that some one was near. He looked up from his book but could see no one, and the sound—whatever it was—had ceased. The wind had risen and was blowing a gale and lashing the water into waves. The *Semiramis* trembled as she sped onward in the increasing darkness.

Wilfred turned to his book again, but had not read a page when a voice cried out:

"De floor is er rockin'! Oh, save me, mammy, save me!"

And to Wilfred's utter amazement Judge rolled from under the berth and sat on the floor, staring about him in bewilderment. His gaze rested on Wilfred and he sprang to his feet.

"Ef yer please, Marse Wilfred," he said, "what is us er doin' in dis little room? 'Pears lack it ain't ra't, somehow."

"What are you doing here, sir?" demanded Wilfred sternly. "Why are you not on your way to Lakeview to-night?"

Judge trembled as he slowly recalled the events of the morning, and he began to whimper.

"I didn' mean ter do dis, Marse Wilfred, 'deed I didn'! I wus pow'ful sleepy dis mawnin' en I crope unner dat little she'f ter try ter git er leetel res'. I 'tended ter sleep fifteen minits 'fore I went back ter de hotel ter 'company yer ter de boat, but it seems lack it's bin more. What will dem chillun do widout me ef I has ter go into Injy wid yer? But maybe de boat will put back ter Mobile in de mawnin' en lemme go home," he added hopefully.

Wilfred, in spite of his indignation, smiled at his simplicity.

"The *Semiramis* will be hundreds of miles from Mobile by morning, sir; but we are likely to meet a fish-boat and you can be sent back in it. Come with me."

And he led the way to the deck, where Captain Seymour was slowly walking to and fro.

"Here is a passenger who was not booked for the voyage," said Wilfred. "Can you give him a place in which to finish his sleep undisturbed to-night? To-morrow, if we meet a boat, he must be sent on his journey back to Oakland." Then he explained to Seymour what had happened.

"Certainly, he can have a place," replied the Captain.

But it is doubtful if Judge slept any more that night.

The next morning a small sail-boat came in sight and the *Semiramis* signaled it to come alongside.

Judge's dusky face grew ashen when Wilfred told him he was to be sent back in it; he felt compara-

tively safe on board the *Semiramis,* especially as his master was in sight. But when he saw the strange faces and the small boat, apparently in momentary danger of being capsized, his courage, never at any time very great, left him and he wept and begged piteously to be allowed to remain where he was. Wilfred disliked to force him to go on board the boat, as it was bound for South Florida points, and he doubted, too, if Judge would be able to make his way home alone, even with money to pay his passage on the train.

"Ef yer will please lemme stay here wid yer, Marse Wilfred, I'll he'p de sailors run dis boat ter pay my way, en I'll wait on Cap'n Roger for sumthin' ter eat w'en yer don't need me; er leetle will do me twell we gits ter Injy en I won' cos' much. 'Sides, I can't sicumnavigate by myse'f. I knows I'd git lost, en den dere won' be nobody ter fly de kites en things fere 'Gene en Bertie."

As a result of his pleadings, and also because he believed his servant could never reach home, Wilfred allowed him to stay on the *Semiramis* and go to Bombay. He took a letter from his pocket which he had written to Eva the night before, and added a few words to it. Then he sealed it and threw it, with a liberal present, to one of the occupants of the boat with the request that he would mail it when he returned to the shore on the morrow.

The man deftly caught it.

"All right, Captain," he called, "I'll do it; and thank you for this."

He put the letter in one pocket and the money in another; and when the boat entered the harbor a few hours later the letter was gone. The fisherman turned his pocket inside out, but found nothing—except a hole several inches long.

"Too bad, Jack," he said to his companion. "I have got the gentleman's money and the sea has swallowed his letter. But 'tain't no use to fret as I can see; what's done is done, and can't be no otherwise. I am sorry, though, for he was a pleasant-spoken gentleman. I'll get on home and mend this pocket afore I goes out again."

Eighteen days after leaving port the *Semiramis* met a homeward-bound vessel and the passengers sent letters by her to their families and friends. Four weeks after Wilfred left home Eva received the first letter from him. A part of it, relating to Judge, she read to Uncle Jasper and Aunt Phebe.

"Dar now!" exclaimed Aunt Phebe, broad smiles banishing the recent gloom of her face, "de blessed chile is safe. It's jest lack I done tole ev'ybody. He never runned er way—he was runned er way wid."

Uncle Jasper looked at her sternly.

"He ain't no chile, Phebe. He's gwine on nineteen en plenty ole 'nuff ter teck keer ov hisse'f. De boat couldn' have tuck him unner no yuther secumstances. What fer did he go ter sleep en leabe me wid all de bisness ter 'tend ter! 'Member what I'm er tellin' yer, Phebe en Sis Patty, I'm er gwine ter wake 'im up good w'en he gits home, *ef* de savages don' hoodoo 'im."

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEETING

It was the tenth of December. A fog so dense that it could be felt enveloped London, in many respects the most wonderful city in the world.

Valerie sat in her room alone. Margaret and Jeffrey Calvert had gone to the picture gallery to see a painting recently exhibited by Whistler. Valerie declined to accompany them, pleading a headache, which was quite true; her head ached equally with her heart. She had been in London more than three months, and not once had she heard from, or of, Philip. He had not written to her—she told herself she knew he would not after their unhappy quarrel.

Yet her heart grew heavy as day after day she watched the mail for a white messenger which never came. Valerie held a letter from Eva in her hand as she sat before the fire this chilly December morning. It was the first letter in which Eva had mentioned Philip or Jenny Seymour.

"You will no doubt be as much surprised as their friends here," she wrote, "to know that there is a rumor to the effect that Charley Dalton is to marry Jenny Seymour. .In fact, it is more than a rumor. My Aunt Stanley tells me it is quite settled between them and they will be married as soon as Miss Seymour's brother gives his consent.

"Jenny is still in Oakland, though not with Aunt Stanley. The school here offered her a better salary than she was getting in Mertonville and as one of the teachers in the Oakland school was anxious to go to Mertonville, the exchange was effected to the satisfaction of all concerned. Of course, she will not teach after this session closes; Charley Dalton is building up a splendid practice and is quite able to support a wife in comfort.

"My Aunt Stanley is well pleased with the match; you know Jenny is a special favorite with her; she even carried her preference so far as to hope that she would some time be her daughter-in-law. And for three months after you left there was a rumor to the effect that Philip would gratify her wish, but it seems there was no foundation for it. I never did believe it does any good to interfere in matters of that kind.

"Philip has told me no word regarding your break with him, as I must believe you have done, judging from the trend of affairs. He is in New York now, though I cannot say what takes him there so much of late, unless there is some truth in the report that he—but I will say no more on that subject. I always like to be sure anything I repeat has a truthful foundation; and his visits to the city *may* be purely professional. I know the Superintendent of Belgrade Hospital considers him the foremost physician of the day and calls him in consultation frequently. Perhaps you will see him when you land"—Valerie turned the page with burning cheeks. "I wrote him

we were expecting you to reach the city the twenty-first.

"The children are longing for you to come home, dear. Do not disappoint them. You can easily reach here by Christmas eve."

Valerie folded the letter and returned it to the envelope as Margaret Calvert came in from her visit to the picture gallery.

"How vividly your cheeks glow, Valerie!" she exclaimed. "I hope your headache is no worse."

"It is much better," Valerie answered; and she might have added that the crimson roses in her cheeks were brought there by the few words in Eva's letter relating to Philip.

They left London the next day for Liverpool, and on the thirteenth sailed for New York, arriving the afternoon of the twenty-first.

Great crowds were swarming about the piers and there was a confusing and indescribable babble of voices. On every side was heard the rich brogue of the emigrant fresh from the land of the Shamrock; the deep, guttural tones of the sons of the Fatherland.

Then came the children of sunny Italy and Spain, betrayed by their voices full of liquid notes; and the New Englander, followed by the English yeoman, the one known by his use of quadruple r's the other by the broad a's which constantly came from his lips.

And like a breath of music among the harsher sounds was heard the soft, low voice of the Southerner.

Valerie looked at the sea of faces as she walked

down the gang-way. Throngs of people were going on board the vessel to meet returning friends and loved ones.

A short distance from the *Urania* the *Sea Queen,* outward bound, lay at anchor; she was to leave the pier at sunset. As the Calverts waited for a carriage which was making its way to them Valerie's eyes rested a moment on a group of three persons who were going on board the *Sea Queen.* As she looked at them her lips grew white and the opal burned her finger.

She saw an elderly lady in black, a few steps in advance of a frail, blue-eyed, golden-haired girl, who leaned on the arm of a tall, distinguished-looking man. She knew him even before he turned his face. He was Philip Stanley, and he passed on without having seen her.

Valerie's heart grew hard and cold and proud as she saw how carefully he led the lady along the uneven walk.

"He knew I was coming on the *Urania,* yet he did not meet me," she thought. "Truly, he has wasted no time in regrets for me. Perhaps it is as Mrs. Gray said: he never cared for me, while I—I loved and trusted him so fully. But from this day, if never before, he is, and must always be, nothing to me. Even if he speaks them, I shall listen to no words of explanation, accept no offer of reconciliation. My beautiful dream is ended."

How could she know that Eva had failed to mention by which vessel she would arrive? And what

voice was there to whisper that the girl who leaned on Philip's arm was an invalid, the patient whom he had been so often called to New York by Doctor Morton to see, and who had been ordered by them to the South of France to spend the winter in a milder climate as the last hope of prolonging her life? How could she know this was the wealthy heiress whose name gossiping tongues had linked with his, and that he was attentive to her in his professional capacity only?

Doctor Morton was to have gone with his sister and niece on board the *Sea Queen*, but he had an imperative call to the hospital and Philip offered to accompany them.

The carriage came up at last, and Jeffrey assisted Margaret and Valerie to enter, and followed them. The door was closed and it rolled away to stop in front of an elegant home on Fifth Avenue, where Hugh and Dora welcomed them.

The next morning Valerie went out to do some Christmas shopping. When she finished her purchases she went into a book-store to get picture books for the children. She found a small volume. "Christmas Bells," which she bought for Eugene, who was in his sixth year. She left New York on the evening train for Oakland, where she arrived Christmas eve.

Christmas day passed quietly at Lakeview. Uncle Horace died on the fifteenth and Wilfred was on the ocean homeward bound. There were no visitors staying at the house, and no merry-makings, as when Wilfred was at home. There was a tree for the chil-

dren and Eva and Valerie distributed presents among the house servants and all children on the plantation. The old and sick were given dinner from the "big house"; no one was forgotten.

"Honey," said Aunt Patty to Valerie, "dere's er Injun camp down de road jest beyon' de mile pos' on de ridge whey de hick'ry grows. You 'members de place?"

"Oh, yes," replied Valerie; "we pass the mile post and hickory tree every time we go to Oakland; and often when I was a child I have, with your assistance, filled my apron with nuts from under the tree."

"Dat's de trufe, honey; yer sho' is; en it ain' bin so long ergo, nuther. But I started ter tell yer what Br'er Jasper says—I better go back er little furder, dough, en tell yer dat dese Injuns—w'at has names jest lack us, John en Ma'y Jane, en sich lack—is de same Injuns w'at's bin comin' ter dis section gwine on five year. Dey comes ter mek baskits outen de cane w'at grows on de crick bank; dat is, de wimen makes baskits en de men hunt deer en turkeys en squir'ls. En Br'er Jasper done tole me w'ile er go dat dey is most starvin', Missy, on 'count ov dere privilege not ter wuck, en game bein' skerse 'cause folkses shoots so much. 'Sides w'ich, t'ree ov de chillun is sick, en been sick fer two weeks widout no medical 'tention f'um Marse Philip consekently ov hes bein' in furen parts en not knowin' he wus needed at home. Well, honey, I t'ought yer mout want ter send 'em sumthin' ter eat ter day."

"You have done quite right in telling me, Mam-

my," said Valerie, whose sympathy was easily aroused, and extended to every suffering creature. "They must be relieved at once." And filling a basket with food she sent it by Uncle Jasper.

"I will go to the camp to-morrow," she thought, "and find out if they need anything else. Poor, unhappy children of the forest, once masters of the land, now roaming like trespassing animals! I pity them."

In the evening the children gathered around Valerie, showing her picture-books and presents which Santa Claus had brought them down the chimney while they slept.

"Please read me something from this book which has a cluster of bells on the back, Valerie," said Eugene, handing her the book she had bought for him in New York. "Read about the bells."

And Valerie opened it and read the first piece:

"'From far Judea's rugged hills,
  Adown the ages ringing,
Once more is heard the sound sublime
  Of Herald Angels singing.

"'Just as they sang to Shepherds old:
  "Peace on earth and mercy mild,"
They to-day are loud proclaiming
  "God and sinners reconciled."

"'Let worlds and seas and stars above
  Proclaim the wondrous story,
That Christ, the Lord, didst come to earth,
  Down from his home in Glory

"'And washed the sin-stained soul in blood—
His blood so freely given;
He bore our sins, He ransomed us,
And showed the way to heaven.

"'Ring, ring, ye joyous Christmas Bells.
And Star of the East arise,
And lead the Magi to the spot
Where the King of earth and heaven lies.'"

Eugene folded his hands and listened in silence until she finished the poem.

"I like that, Valerie," he said, his face still and quiet. "I feel as if the bells were ringing and making sweet music in my heart."

Valerie stooped and kissed him.

When she awoke the next morning a heavy rain was falling and she could not go to the Indian wigwam as she wished. The rain continued for three days, then the sun forced his way through the clouds to cheer the drenched earth with warmth and brightness. The trees, save pine and cedar, were brown and bare, and deserted by the birds which lived among the branches in the glad summer-time. There was no sound of the timid bob-white, or cooing dove; there were no humming bees nor changing butterflies. It was the time of nature's rest.

When the sun was nearly overhead, Valerie, with Aunt Patty and the little boys, went to the wigwam. It was the first time that Eugene and Bertram had ever seen Indian children and they gazed at the red faces, the shiny, bead-like eyes and long black hair.

Seated on a log outside the wigwam was a man, grim and silent, tanning deer-skins; he did not raise his head nor by the slightest sign betray that he knew any one was passing.

Mitts had followed the boys and now began to bark at two hungry-looking dogs lying by the open door-way. But when they got up, and with raised bristles approached him he evidently thought discretion was the better part of valor, and retreating to his masters sat down at Bertram's feet and looked at them with as much scorn as his small eyes could express.

A woman sat on a box in the damp wigwam, making a basket.

The children were better, she told Valerie. The good "medicine-man" had been to see them the day before. Betty and Sarah, as they were called, but whose names were "Beautiful Star of the Evening" and "Shining Water," were in the woods gathering roots to make dye to color the baskets. And five-year old Mandy, "The Shy Wild Rose," and two smaller children, were rolling on the ground playing with dolls which the "medicine-man" had given them. The young "medicine-man" was "heap good," the woman said, her fingers busy with the basket she was making. He had bought all John's deer-skins and was coming again to-day to see their "Prairie Flowers."

Valerie arose to leave; she promised to send them many things which she had discovered they needed. Eugene came to her side and whispered:

"Why don't they live in a good house, Valerie? This wiglywam is so wet and cold. Don't you think the poor lady would better like that little house by the beech tree? It has a floor, and a chimney where they could build a fire. They will stay here a week longer; ask her, Valerie, to go to that house."

Valerie turned to the Indian woman:

"My little nephew wants you to leave your wigwam and live in the house you see across the way while you are here. Will you do so to please him?"

The woman smiled, a soft light in her bead-like eyes. She muttered some words in her own tongue as she looked at Eugene. Then she answered, with a motion of her hand indicating the wigwam and the house: "Heap bad; heap good!"

Valerie went away, but looked back, when she had gone a short distance, to see two women with bundles on their backs going to the little house under the beech trees. They were so much pleased with it that they remained until the yellow jasmine bloomed. The Indian children adored Valerie and she visited them often.

Philip Stanley had been called away a few days after Christmas. One day as Valerie was coming from the Indian camp she met him a short distance from Lakeview; Aunt Patty and the children were nearing the gate. Philip turned and walked with Valerie.

"I have just returned," he said. "I called at the house and Eva told me that you had gone to the Indian camp on an errand of charity—and I was

glad, Valerie, for one who relieves suffering will hesitate to inflict pain. Shall we forget those unkind words spoken four months ago?"

He tried to look into her eyes but she kept her face averted. Her heart beat tumultuously and she could not answer him, and walked on in silence, steeling her heart against him. She thought that Philip, her hero, had been playing with her love. Those words spoken by Mrs. Gray were still ringing in her ears and Philip had refused to deny them. And after what she had witnessed the day she returned to New York she could not doubt that later report.

"Valerie," said Philip earnestly, "I need you. Have you no pity for me?—or did you expend it all on the untutored children of the forest? You will answer me!"

She flushed and trembled.

"He 'needs' me," she thought. "He does not say that he loves me, he only 'needs' me; perhaps the other girl is not free and he would raise a barrier between them—myself."

"Valerie, your answer!"

"This is my answer," she said, holding up her hand, her eyes and voice steady. "I would have returned your ring months ago, but for the promise I gave you that I would not take it from my finger. You will please remove it now."

Philip's face grew pale.

"I will do so," he said, looking into her eyes, "but only on two conditions. You promised to wear the opal as long as you loved me and I know you will

not break that promise." He held her hand, his fingers on the ring. "Tell me, now, that you have ceased to care for me, and if you will return to me the kiss I gave you the day I placed this ring upon your finger, then I will remove it and sink it in the river."

She raised her head proudly and deliberately spoke the first falsehood that had ever stained her lips.

"I was a child a few months ago—a child in experience, if not in years. I know my own heart better now, and I know that I do not love you."

Philip's hand closed tightly over hers, and she grew so white that he was alarmed. She quickly drew her hands from his and covered her face.

"I will not," she cried passionately—"I will not degrade myself in my own eyes! I will not stain my lips with a falsehood! I recall those words! I have loved you,—I—but I can, I *will* forget that you have ever been more to me than a stranger. Will you take your ring and leave me? I do not wish to see or speak to you again."

"I will leave you at the door," he answered with trembling lips; "but the opal I will not take until you comply with the conditions."

Philip had loved Valerie tenderly, devotedly, never giving a thought to another; but as he walked in silence by her side he felt the old affection grow cold and dim beside the love—strong, deep, passionate, and lasting—which filled his heart. The old love compared to the new had been—"as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine. He had lost her.

This cold, proud girl was not the same Valerie who loved him in the summer forever gone. Strange that he should remember now that he had almost wished she loved him less; while to-day he would have given the wealth of the world, were it his to bestow, to turn time backward to that spring morning when she stood in the jasmine-covered arbor waiting for his coming; the golden bells touching her hair, the roses at her feet, her eyes shining, her cheeks glowing. But pride forbade him to speak the words which would have effected a reconciliation. He had done nothing—Valerie should have trusted him; he would not speak.

There was no smile on his lips or in his steel-blue eyes when they reached the door.

"I must abide by your decision," he said. "Is it unalterable?"

"It is unalterable!"

CHAPTER XIV

A DEPARTURE AND A STRANGER

Philip went to his room and bolted the door; he threw himself upon a couch and buried his face in his hands. Sir Colin was lying on a rug in front of the fire when he came in. The dog watched him through narrow, half-closed eyes a while, then went to him, and sitting down as close as possible, leaned heavily against him.

He knew his master was in trouble and he tried to comfort him in the only way he knew; and although that loved master would not look at him, neither spoke to him nor laid his hand upon him, Sir Colin felt that he knew a friend, faithful and sympathetic, was with him.

The dinner-hour came, the bell rang, but Philip did not heed it.

"My son has not returned," said Mrs. Stanley, as she took her place at the table.

"Oh, yes, he have, Miss Jane," said Aunt Tildy, coming in with the soup which she placed before the lady. "Sophocles done put Stella up more'n two hours ergo, en I seed Marse Philip w'en he went up de stairs, but I ain' seed 'im come down."

"Go to the Doctor's room, Sam," said his mistress, "and tell him dinner is ready."

Sam bowed and hurried away, the tray and a white napkin in his hand.

"If you please, Miss," he said when he returned to the dining-room a few minutes later, "the Doctor is powerful busy now, and don't want to be 'sturbed twell he 'complishes his undertakin's, and requests that you won't wait for him. The truth is, Aunt Tildy," he said when he went to the kitchen, "I didn't want to 'sturb Miss twell after dinner, but I ain't seed Marse Philip. The door is locked and he tole me through the key-hole that he didn't want no dinner, konsekently I said he wus busy."

When Sam went down-stairs Philip left the house and went to the home of the manager, who had charge of the plantation in his frequent absences. He remained with him an hour; then went home and asked for his mother.

"Miss have driv' over to Lakeview to see the ladies," Sam told him. "And she left the answer for you that she would be home by sundown, and I'm a 'spectin' of her now."

Philip went to his room and packed a valise, Sir Colin following him everywhere, as if he feared to let him get out of his sight.

On the mantel, in a silver frame, was a picture of Valerie. Philip looked at the smiling face.

"I must forget her before I return," he thought. He removed the picture from the frame and slipped it in the back of his watch. In his desk he found the fan broken between them the evening of the dinner party at Lakeview; he threw it passionately on the

floor, then picked it up, and wrapping it in a piece of white tissue-paper put it in his pocket. His preparations for departure were soon completed and he only awaited the coming of his mother before leaving his home.

The book "Horatio Layton" lay on the table before which Philip sat. He opened it and turned the leaves without reading it; he remembered the words he had used the day, not many months gone by, when Charley Dalton had brought it to his mother, and he smiled bitterly. "I shall never wander through foreign lands in search of hearts-ease; I'll find it at home or do without." Yet in less than six months from that day he was leaving all and going on a journey which would end, he told himself, when he had forgotten the girl who had changed the sweetness of life to bitter dregs.

"Do not mention Valerie Lake's name in your letters," Philip said to his mother, and those words told her all.

In her room that night the mother wept alone. Of the three, she was, perhaps, the most unhappy. Her idolized son was going away and she was powerless to keep him. Yet she was brave as any Spartan mother, and if there were tears in her eyes there was also a smile on her lips when she bade him good-by the next morning.

Philip joined a party of explorers who left Boston the following week for the coast of Labrador, where they would spend the remainder of the winter, then go on to Parry Islands to study the peculiarities and

mode of life of a tribe of Esquimaux said to have been recently discovered in that remote region.

The train which bore Philip away left a stranger on the platform, a stranger who inquired the way to Lakeview.

"Missy," said Mammy, coming into Eva's room about an hour after the stranger arrived in Oakland, "dere is er strange gentulman in de parler er axin' fer yer. I don' know who he kin be, but he's got er big trunk in de hack at de door, what's powerful familyer."

And Eva, with no thought of evil, went to meet him.

CHAPTER XV

A SECRET OF THE SEA

Uncle Horace was dead. He had failed rapidly after Wilfred arrived in India, and realizing that he could not recover he began putting his worldly affairs in order. All his property and business interests were converted into money and transferred to New York banks. He had intended to leave the major part of his wealth to Wilfred, and told him repeatedly that he would make him his heir. But a few weeks before his death an unseen presence was with him urging him to make a new will, and he was troubled; he felt that it would be unjust to do so now, after leading Wilfred to believe for years that he would be the heir.

He struggled against the thoughts which came to him, but could not banish them. At last he told Wilfred of his desire, and the nephew earnestly advised him to follow his inclinations and dispose as he wished of the wealth accumulated by his years of labor.

"Property honorably acquired is one's own to do with as one chooses," Wilfred said in conclusion.

The unselfish answer pleased the uncle and lightened the weight which had rested upon him. And so a new will was made, under which Wilfred and his family were to receive one hundred and fifty thou-

sand dollars and the remainder of his large fortune was given unconditionally and without reserve to Valerie, thus making her one of the wealthiest heiresses in the State.

On the twenty-second of December, Wilfred, with his servant, left Bombay on the *Agra*, a vessel belonging to the Q. T. Company, for Mobile. For three weeks the weather was mild and the vessel made good progress, sailing in a southwesterly direction until the Cape of Good Hope was passed, when the course was changed and she turned north of west until the island of Tristan D'achuna was left behind; then northwest, heading for Bahai, and leaving Trinidad and Martin Vaz to the right.

It was night when the twentieth degree of latitude was crossed. Dark clouds were moving rapidly across the heavens; a stiff wind was blowing which grew in violence as the darkness increased. A storm had been brewing for days. The wailing of the wind and the mournful voice of the sea mingled, became one, and grew louder and yet louder until it ended in a shriek of fury.

The roar of the thunder, reverberating against the distant shore, was like the crash of deadly artillery. The constant lightning revealed the seething, foaming waters, making a picture never to be forgotten.

The few passengers and those of the crew who were not on duty gathered on the deck. Judge stood close to his master. To say that he was terrified would be expressing his feelings mildly; it was the first storm the *Agra* had encountered and the *Semir-*

amis had made the voyage to India across comparatively smooth seas.

The *Agra* labored for hours against the wind and mountainous waves; she was driven miles out of her course. Near midnight the wind began to subside, but the awful voice of the waters continued. The thunder sounded less frequently; the storm was abating.

Then in the glare of lightning, without a moment's warning, with no time to turn a hairsbreadth, the bow of a large ship was seen bearing down upon them. The crash came. A flying spar struck Wilfred Lake and threw him, stunned and senseless, into the water.

Judge, with a loud shriek, and barely conscious of what he was doing, sprang after him, and both were folded in the embrace of the relentless water.

The ships stopped; trembled a moment, then slowly backed away from each other. The vessel which ran against the *Agra* lost one of her small boats, but was not injured, and after ascertaining that the *Agra,* although badly crippled, was in no danger of sinking, proceeded on her way, and the *Agra* proceeded with what speed she could to Bahai for repairs.

In the confusion which followed the collision Wilfred and his servant were not missed. Late in the forenoon of the following day the captain knocked at the door of Wilfred's room—he had not come to breakfast and he was getting alarmed. There was no response; he knocked again. Still no voice bade him

enter, and feeling that something was wrong, he opened the door and went in. The stateroom was empty, the berth had not been slept in.

Captain Langley rushed on deck and instantly a search for Wilfred was instituted. And although every nook and corner of the ship from stem to stern was visited, no trace of him could be found; at length they were forced to admit that he was not on board the ship, and all agreed that he had been washed into the sea and drowned while the storm was raging. And although he knew that it would have been useless, yet the captain would have turned back and searched for him had it not been for the condition of the *Agra,* which was beginning to leak in an alarming way, so he kept on to Bahai. And he knew also that to search for him on the ocean, with its millions of by-ways, would be worse than searching for the proverbial needle.

The sea closes over her victims and never reveals their hiding places. And ever—in the morning, at noon and at night, through her low, soft murmurings, and when she rises in anger to meet the tempest—she sings a requiem for those whose lives she claims.

Oh! wonderful secrets of the sea, beyond the power of man to fathom. Secrets never to be divulged while time shall last!

It was the first of March when the *Agra* arrived at Mobile. Captain Langley left the ship in charge of the mate, and taking Wilfred Lake's luggage with him went to Oakland. He procured a cab and pro-

ceeded without delay to Lakeview. He had an unpleasant duty to perform—he must tell Wilfred Lake's loved ones, who were daily looking for his return, that the ocean had claimed him, that he would come to them no more.

Uncle Jasper came around the corner of the house as Captain Langley reached the front door.

"Is Mrs. Lake at home?" he asked.

Uncle Jasper answered in the affirmative.

"Say that I wish to see her. And, old man, have those trunks you will find in the cab taken into the house."

Uncle Jasper showed the Captain into the parlor and sent Aunt Patty to tell her mistress a stranger was asking to see her. Then he went out and helped the cab-driver to carry the trunks into the hall.

Captain Langley stood by the window, wishing he had written instead of coming with such tidings, when Eva came in.

He turned to meet her.

"Mrs. Lake, I suppose?"

Eva bowed.

"I am Captain Langley, of the *Agra,* from Bombay to Mobile, madam."

Eva grew pale, but no premonition of the truth came to her.

"You bring news of my husband," she said. "We were expecting him to arrive by the *Agra.* I have had no message from him since the twenty-second of December. He cabled me he would leave Bombay

on the *Agra.* Yet at the last moment business detained him and she sailed without him. Is it not so?"

The Captain hesitated, then began to speak rapidly:

"Your husband left Bombay in the *Agra,* madam, yet he has not come home in her. When we crossed the twentieth degree of latitude northwest of Martin Vaz a terrific storm struck the vessel and raged for hours. A ship blown from her course collided with the *Agra,* and there was much confusion on board. The next morning Wilfred Lake could not be found; he was not missed until about noon, twelve hours after the collision. The vessel was searched. It is the belief of all that he and his servant, who kept close to him during the storm, were washed overboard, and on account of the intense darkness and the roar of the elements we were in ignorance of his fate.

"As near as we can judge, madam, the accident occurred in latitude twenty-three and near the thirty-first parallel of longitude."

Eugene came into the room in time to hear the last words. He never forgot them.

The Captain, his self-imposed task finished, bowed and left the house.

Then a cry burst from Eva's lips:

"Wilfred! O Wilfred! Wilfred!"

CHAPTER XVI

SPENDING THE FORTUNE

One year had passed since Wilfred Lake was lost at sea. For days Eva hoped against hope that he had been picked up and would come home. But as the weeks grew into months without bringing him, despair settled upon her heart and she drooped beneath the weight of her sorrow. She had no business ability, and gladly resigned everything of a business nature to Charley Dalton, her husband's law partner and cousin.

Valerie was in possession, and had absolute control, of the fortune left her by her uncle. From her earliest years she had dreamed of a hospital where the sick poor could get attention; and a home, a place of refuge for destitute widows and orphans, helpless infancy and homeless age—the latter the most pitiable of all conditions.

The means to make that dream a reality came to her at a time when she believed the sweetness of her life was past. She would never love again and would find forgetfulness and contentment in relieving suffering as much as she could. She did not grow bitter and cynical as many have done when robbed of happiness, but her manner grew cold and proud and formal, except to her most intimate friends.

When Philip left her she determined that no other

lover should touch her hand or tell her of his love. And she never broke that resolve. In time she was called heartless; the charge was true—she had given her heart to Philip Stanley and never got it back again. She did not know in what part of the world he wandered. Once only in the twelve months which had passed since the day she met him as she was returning from the Indian camp, Eva began to tell her something about him. But she stopped her with a word and a gesture:

"Never speak to me of him!" she had said haughtily. "Let his name rest." And Eva obeyed her.

She gave her whole time and attention to charity. Surely a better work than she contemplated was never begun!

She bought one thousand acres of land on the outskirts of Oakland and began the erection of the buildings. Skilled architects were employed and the work was done under the supervision of men of unquestioned integrity.

At the same time that the Oakland Home and Hospital were commenced, another, much larger, but identical in every other respect, was begun three miles from Mobile, on the shore of the bay and in sight and sound of the waves and water.

The work progressed rapidly, and six months after the corner-stone was laid the buildings were completed.

In many respects the hospital in Oakland—and the one in Mobile was similar in every way—was managed differently from any charitable institution of

the kind in the world. It had a superintendent and board of managers and staff of physicians and nurses. It had an endowment of fifty thousand dollars. The land was under a high state of cultivation and the proceeds of the crops raised were to be given to the hospital fund.

The main buildings were three-quarters of a mile from the Home, and were so constructed that the most exclusive were surrounded with as much privacy as their own homes afforded, and could receive every attention that wealth could command without coming in contact with the poor and charity patients.

But it was for these—the halt, the lame, the blind; the poorest beggar that walked the streets in rags, living on a few cents daily, procured as only he knew how—it was for these, when disease and sickness overtook them, that the hospital was especially designed. And many were the unfortunates sheltered within its walls who blessed the name of Valerie Lake, the lovely young girl who was giving so freely of her wealth and time to relieve, as much as she could, suffering, poverty-stricken creatures.

When her friends learned of the way in which Valerie was disposing of her fortune they remonstrated with her and tried to dissuade her from her purpose. It was too bad, they said, to scatter such a magnificent fortune to the winds. Much excellent advice was given her, all of which she listened to with grave politeness but with unshaken purpose.

She felt that she was doing right and she would not abandon her cherished work. Then the wise

ones said that Horace Lake had made a great mistake when he left so much money to his niece. It was no less than a calamity, for since her brother was lost at sea there was no one to take charge of it for her. Not one woman in ten thousand, they agreed, had the ability to spend money wisely, and Valerie at the beginning had shown that she was no exception to the rule.

Eva and Mrs. Gray, who, with Lily, were again at Lakeview, entreated her to give up her wild ideas.

"There are so many charitable institutions," said Eva. "You can help the poor in a better way through them. Be reasonable, Valerie, and heed the advice given you by those who have lived longer, and had more experience, than you. Put your money in the bank, or invest it in something safe, but do not, in a few months, cast away that which Uncle Horace was years in accumulating."

Eva opposed Valerie's munificent gifts to charity, not from any undue love of money, but because she thought it was her duty to do so. She believed Wilfred would not have allowed her to give so freely.

"And, Valerie," said Mrs. Gray, "I believe the first duty of those who wish to be charitable is to give to educational institutions. The world cannot advance unless the children are educated."

Valerie listened attentively and patiently. In the year gone by since Philip went out of her life and her brother was lost at sea she had grown quieter and graver and ever restless. She was never idle; every day was filled with some good work. To the

children she was a companion, a friend, a helper. She shared their pleasures and soothed their sorrows.

She visited the sick in the hospital and the rooms seemed the brighter for her presence. But her cheeks were growing pale and her dusky eyes were larger and full of shadows.

Mrs. Gray gave her opinion about the distribution of charity in general with a decision of tone and manner which admitted of no contradiction.

When she had finished, Valerie rose from her chair and stood with her hand resting on the back, the opal on her finger emitting brilliant lights.

The words spoken by Eva and Mrs. Gray might as well have fallen on deaf ears so far as any power they had to influence her to change her purpose was concerned. With a slight smile on her lips she answered them.

"I am not a romantic girl," she said, "determined, as my friends seem to believe, upon recklessly wasting my fortune. Of the money given me by Uncle Horace I have one hundred thousand dollars invested in city property—"

"Yes," interrupted Mrs. Gray, "and twenty times that amount given away."

"True," answered Valerie; "but it is not lost. All my life I have wanted to build a hospital, and now when the ability to do so is mine I believe I am doing right to take advantage of it.

"Uncle Horace must have felt that his gift to me would have been put to some such good use, else why was he so anxious to change his will. You and Mrs.

Gray, Eva, seem to think that I will receive no income from these two completed hospitals and the eight in course of construction.

"You are mistaken. I get three per cent. of the amounts cleared by them. One fourth of the remainder is put aside for the support of the Home and the other three-fourths goes into the hospital treasury. I have chosen this because I believe it is of all work the most important.

"Education is a mark of civilization; the two go hand in hand. An educated nation is a civilized nation and leads to an enlightened people. But there are hundreds who give freely for the support of educational institutions for one who remembers the sick and afflicted poor; for one who provides a shelter for destitute children and famishing age. I believe it is the first and most Christian-like duty to relieve the physical wants—to give hospitals and homes before libraries, to give *bread* before *books*."

She left them abruptly and went to her room, to hide the tears in her eyes.

"I see, Eva," said Mrs. Gray, "that it is useless to advise Valerie. I supposed she could be easily influenced, but I find she has grown wonderfully self-reliant." "Wilful and obstinate" were the words she said to herself. "And she has also developed a remarkable talent for managing her own affairs. She will insist upon calling the institutions 'hospitals' instead of 'sanitariums.'

"I am sure the enterprise would be much more successful if she would have the latter word fastened

over the doors. It has an exclusive sound, not at all like the common 'hospital.' "

Eva made no reply, but sat looking at a line of blue smoke coming from a boat on the river a half mile away, and curling upward until it was lost in the sunset clouds.

CHAPTER XVII

PHILIP RETURNS

It was mid-April when Philip Stanley, with the exploring party, returned to Boston. He counted the thirteen months spent in the Arctic circle as wasted; the knowledge gained of the Parry Islanders would be of very little benefit to scientists—and he had not forgotten! He was going home now to stay, he told himself.

He had not heard from his mother for more than a year, and she had had no letter from him since he left the coast of Labrador.

When Philip left home he did not intend to put himself out of communication with the world. He only wanted to get thousands of miles away where he could not see, nor hear of Valerie; when he told his mother not to mention her name in letters to him he did not know he was going to a region where "Uncle Sam's" mail service was not in daily operation.

He was eager to get home. He would wander no more; he had not found hearts-ease,—those simple words he had used that evening to Charley Dalton persisted in returning to him,—and he would search for it no longer.

In the afternoon of the third day after Philip arrived in Boston, Sam was in the lot yard pumping water for the horses. Sir Colin lay on the grass

near by watching, with evident content, two small pigs rolling in a mud hole.

Sam rested on the pump-handle to watch a gentleman who was coming down the road leading from the station.

"I done left the outside gate open," thought Sam, "and if that stranger keeps on by this way Sir Colin is agoing to run out and bark at him. The dawg won't bite, but the sound of his voice is upsettin'. I'll try to keep him, 'cause I can't leave the hosses to go close the gate."

He patted the dog and pointed to the man.

"You sees him, don't you, Sir Colin?" he said. "Well, don't go a-nigh him; but stay whey you is."

The dog looked up, wagging his tail; then with a wild yelp bounded away to meet the gentleman. He sprang upon him, and rolled on the ground, then up and on him again, all the time uttering sounds of delight.

Sam gazed at the dog, fearing he had gone mad. But when the man caressed him, Sam left the horses and ran to the house.

"Miss," he called as he hurried down the hall to the front porch where Mrs. Stanley was tying a climbing-rose to a lattice—"O Miss, if my eyes don't 'ceive me, the prodigal has 'turned! Marse Philip has 'rove!"

The mother turned as her son came up the steps.

CHAPTER XVIII

EUGENE'S DREAM

"Now, mother," said Philip, as they sat before the fire in the home-like drawing-room after supper, "tell me about my little cousin Eugene. He has grown stronger and more like other children, I hope."

"Indeed he has not, Philip," she answered. "Since Wilfred's fatal voyage to India, Eugene has become so delicate, so ethereal that I fear he cannot live long. Every time I go to Lakeview he asks me when you will return; he says he wants to ask you a question.

"His mother and I have tried to get him to tell us what it is, but he refuses to do so and insists that you can answer it better than any one else. He was here this afternoon—Jasper brought him and Bertram. He came to ask me if I had heard from you, and when I answered that I had not the wistful look in his eyes made my heart ache."

"I will go to Lakeview in the morning," said Philip, "and answer his question if I can. I know from experience it is likely to be a hard one. But, mother, what did you mean by 'Wilfred's fatal voyage to India'?"

"When did you hear from Lakeview, Philip?"

"Nearly fourteen months ago."

"Then you know nothing of what has transpired there?"

"Nothing whatever. The family—all are at home, I suppose?"

He asked the question, his face growing pale, his thoughts flying to Valerie, though he did not speak her name.

"Wilfred was lost on the return voyage from India," said Mrs. Stanley gravely.

Philip was shocked.

"Poor Eva and unhappy children!" he cried. "Why, I was sure he came home the morning I went to Boston. I remember seeing a trunk on the platform at the station with Wilfred Lake's name on it."

"Captain Langley, of the *Agra,* was bringing it home; he came to tell Eva of the accident." And Mrs. Stanley gave her son a detailed account of what had happened.

The next morning Philip went to Lakeview. He had intended to keep away from the place whenever Valerie was at home, and yet in less than twenty-four hours after his return he was walking along the path which led by the rose garden. He hoped he would not meet her, and after this visit, which duty demanded him to make, he would not go again—he would not put himself in the way of temptation.

How beautiful the green trees and bright-hued flowers appeared to his eyes, which for thirteen months had looked upon an unbroken expanse of blinding white snow and ice.

The king of song birds was making the mock-orange grove ring with the sounds which came from

his throat, and gay-winged butterflies were sporting among the roses.

Here and there upon the grass lay bells of yellow jasmine, fallen from the vines which climbed among the water-oaks.

As Philip passed the summer-house he glanced in, to see a flower fairer than any which grew in the garden—Valerie, all in white, was there.

She did not see him and he kept on, his heart beating passionately. But the wish to look into her eyes, to hear her speak, mastered him and he turned back and stood in the doorway.

Valerie looked up; the roses faded from her face, leaving her as white as a snow-drop.

"Valerie!" he said, and the next instant he was by her side, her hands clasped in his. But she drew away, and looked at him so coldly, so indifferently, that the blood rushed to Philip's brow. He dropped her hands.

"Forgive me," he said proudly. "I forgot for a moment that we must be as strangers. I thought time might have softened your resentment and you would have a word for me."

"You were mistaken," said Valerie, her voice and eyes steady; "I have nothing to say to you, either now or any other time. You will let me pass."

"No," Philip said, his lips quivering, "I am going. I have come to see Eugene." And he went on, leaving Valerie alone in the summer-house with the keenest pain at her heart she had ever known. The breeze stirred the jasmine vines above her head and

the perfume of the yellow bells seemed to float around her, filling the air with overpowering fragrance.

For many moments she was conscious of only one feeling—an intense dislike for the jasmine!"

Philip was met at the door by Eugene.

"O Cousin Philip!" he cried, "I have wanted you so much."

"Well, I am here now," answered Philip, as he lifted the little boy in his arms and went into the house. "What can I do for you? But first tell me where your mother and Bertram are this morning."

"They have gone to Oakland to see Mr. Perry, the doctor. Bertie has been eating too much candy and has the teefache. And Mammy has taken Baby Eva to the lake to feed the fish. I was to have gone with them but I was tired and did not want to go. Shall I tell Valerie that you are here, Cousin Philip? She is in the rose garden. I know you love to see her, everybody does, she is so good."

Philip flushed.

"You need not tell her I am here. I want to talk to you. Tell me what you have been doing; do you play in the sunshine every day with Bertie?"

"I don't love to play now," answered Eugene. "I get tired so quickly. Cousin Philip," he said in a low voice and folding his thin white hands, "I dream most every night! May I tell you my dream and ask you a question? I don't like to ask mother, it would make her cry."

"Tell me your dreams, Eugene, and ask me as

many questions as you like. I will answer them if I can."

"It is just one dream," began Eugene, "and always the same. When I go to sleep I see latitude twenty-three and the thirty-first parallel of longitude —that is what the captain said who told us about father. I don't know what it means, Cousin Philip; but it seems to be a place, and it is not a nice place, either. It is so small and the water is all around it."

"Perhaps you have been dreaming about an island," suggested Philip. "You have been studying geography and some island on the map has impressed you. You know an island is land surrounded by water. What did you see on the island?"

"I saw great trees unlike any that grow here. There is no city and no houses—the trees are everywhere; and some bear fruit, but not apples nor peaches. And great things like turtles, only a hundred times larger, come out of the water and move about the sand.

"And every night I see a man sitting on a rock and looking across the water for a boat which never comes. He keeps his face turned from me. If he would look at me I would know him and could help him. There is another man on the island, a little man no larger than Judge was, and he keeps his face turned away from me too. Sometimes he gathers fruit and sometimes he dips water out of a clear brook which runs through the island and gives it to the man on the rock to drink. And sometimes he

roasts eggs, and sometimes he lies on the sand and cries. That is all the dream, Cousin Philip.

"Now tell me what is latitude twenty-three and the thirty-first parallel of longitude, and where is Martin Vaz? I asked Uncle Jasper and Mammy, but they did not know, and I would not ask any one else, because most folks don't want to be troubled with children's questions."

"Many persons might well be proud to answer such questions as yours, Eugene," said Philip, and he explained to him the meaning of the words which had puzzled him so long.

"If you will bring me your geography I will show you the map where you can find the degrees of latitude and longitude and the island of Martin Vaz."

Eugene got an atlas and gave it to Philip, who found a large map of the world.

"Here is the place," he said.

Eugene looked at it a long time in silence.

"Cousin Philip," he said at length, "there is nothing but water here. I do not see the island I dreamed about."

"No, child, there is no island here; it was only a dream. I want you to forget about latitude and longitude and dream no more; it is not best for little boys."

But Eugene could not promise.

That night, in the darkest hour before dawn, while all in the household were wrapped in slumber and the Spirit of Night hovered over the pillows whisper-

ing dreams to the sleepers, Eva was awakened by a loud cry from Eugene.

She ran to him and found him sobbing bitterly. She gathered him into her arms and tried to quiet him.

"What has frightened you, dear? Tell mother."

"I am not frightened," he answered, with tears. "The man on the island turned his head and looked at me; he is father, and Judge is there too."

It was the first time Eva, or any one beside Philip, had heard of his dream.

"O child, child!" she cried, "you have been dreaming!"

"I know it is not all a dream, mother; father is on an island with the great ocean around him, looking every day for a boat to come for him. I want Cousin Philip—I want him now—he knows; I have told him."

It was in vain that Eva and Valerie and Mammy tried to soothe him; he only wept and pleaded for Philip.

As soon as the first light appeared in the east Uncle Jasper was sent for Doctor Stanley, who came, and Eugene told him of the dream.

"I was standing in a mist, Cousin Philip, and the sun was shining on the man who watches the water. He turned his face to me and I knew him. Won't you leave here to-day in a boat, Cousin Philip, and bring father home? He is on an island in the ocean, but the latitude and longitude are not the same that Captain Langley mentioned.

Philip could not promise to go on such a wild search, and he would not deceive Eugene by telling him he would go when he had no intention of doing so. He believed, as every one else did, that it was a sick child's fancy.

Eugene wept and pleaded, and at last grew seriously ill. Eva was in despair. She believed Eugene would die unless his wishes were gratified. And if she did have the ocean searched for Wilfred and failed to find him, as she must do, the disappointment would be fatal to the child. She did not know what to do, so she waited and wept, hoping Eugene would forget his dream; but he did not. He grew more insistent each day, and begged that some one would take a boat to the island and rescue his father.

"Don't cry any more, darling," said Valerie at last, "I will send a vessel to search for him."

And after she gave the promise she was eager to fulfil it. But without help she was powerless, she thought; she would not ask Philip to aid her. She started one morning to Oakland to see her cousin, Charley Dalton, when she met Captain Seymour, who had just returned from the Indian Ocean. She told him of Eugene's dream and her wish to gratify him.

Seymour offered to procure a vessel and take command of it if she wished him to do so, which offer Valerie accepted, she, of course, bearing every expense.

"I shall go with you," Philip said to Seymour when the two were together in the evening. "I am

not needed here, and I was going anyway. I could not longer refuse the child's pleadings. I have not told the family, because I have had some difficulty in getting the yacht I wanted, as I could not attend to it personally. However, I had a letter to-day from the friend who looked after the matter for me. The vessel will be in readiness to leave the bay in three days."

"You believe, as I do," said Seymour, "that the search is useless?"

"I do. Nevertheless, I shall try to find the island of his dream. You will oblige me, Roger, by not mentioning what I have told you about procuring the yacht."

"But the ladies will know," exclaimed Seymour, "that I could not have gotten everything in readiness for the voyage in three days!"

"We will risk it," said Philip quietly. "Now tell me how you have fared since I saw you nearly two years ago."

"I will tell you first of my happiness," answered Seymour. "On the fifteenth of June I am to be married to the hazel-eyed girl I told you of that day in Mobile. Philip, you may believe me fickle, and not without cause, when I tell you that for months after I went back to India I had to fight against the memory of the other—you remember I told you of her, and nothing but my love for you helped me to conquer that feeling. When my sister wrote me that Lily was free my heart turned to her and is safely

anchored now. I think I must have loved her a little all the time and I am very happy.

"If it is true that there is no such thing as second love there is a substitute which is just as good, perhaps better."

Philip was silent a long time; he was thinking of his blighted hopes and he knew there could be no second love for him. He would love Valerie as long as he lived.

"Have you been to Marsville?" he asked.

"No," answered Seymour somewhat ruefully. "I landed the day before yesterday and have had no time, as yet. And now I cannot."

"Go to-morrow. The *Aurora* cannot leave until Monday, which gives you two days to spend as you like. You had better go on to-night's train. It is possible that you may not return from this voyage to the Southern Seas in time for your appointed wedding day, for I mean to search until I find the island of Eugene's dream if it is in existence."

Seymour went to Marsville, and Philip returned to Lakeview to see Eugene.

Valerie avoided him and he never met her when he went to the house. Nothing but Eugene's condition kept her at Lakeview. She would go to Dora Calvert as soon as Eugene grew better. She did not know that Philip was going with Seymour to search for her brother—nor did any one tell her until after the vessel had sailed.

"I will be away for many weeks, Eugene," Philip said when he came the last time before leaving for

Mobile, where the *Aurora* awaited him. "Do not dream any more, and be a brave little boy and prepare yourself for a great disappointment. To please you I am going with Captain Seymour to search for an island which I believe does not exist."

"I have seen it, Cousin Philip," answered Eugene. "You will find it and bring father home. Bring Judge, too; Uncle Jasper does not believe I have seen him."

Monday morning, ten days from the time Philip returned from the Arctic regions, he was again on the ocean, bound for the Southern Seas on one of the wildest voyages ever undertaken.

Sixteen days after leaving Mobile they reached Martin Vaz; and for days the *Aurora* glided across the waters looking for an unknown island; trying to wrest a secret from the sea.

Seymour had marked out the course he intended to follow.

"We will search between the tenth and fortieth degrees of latitude and the tenth and thirtieth parallels of longitude. I do not think it is worth while to go farther."

"We will try that first," answered Philip.

They sailed around the four sides of the road laid out; then from northwest to southeast; then four hundred miles on the same course, when they turned and ran due west. But no unknown island was found.

They went from southwest to northeast with the same discouraging results.

"We have searched this body of water pretty thoroughly," said Seymour at the end of the fifth week. "Have you any suggestions to make, Philip?"

"We will not give up the search yet," answered Philip. "I am beginning to believe there is an island in here, although we have failed to find it."

"I do not see where it can be. The *Aurora* has sailed in every point of the compass," said Seymour. "However, I will try another way now. I will take the vessel in a serpentine course over every five miles of this block."

Two hours before sunset of the next day, seven hundred miles southeast of Martin Vaz, and out of the sea road, the lookout stationed in the rigging called in a loud voice the one word, "Land!"

Instantly all was excitement on board, and the yacht was headed straight for the misty object on the edge of the horizon, which the experienced seamen knew was an island.

The *Aurora* ran five knots an hour until dark, then crept along till morning. When the sun rose they saw an island about two miles directly south of them. As they drew nearer they moved cautiously, looking for rocks and reefs.

Philip stood on deck, his gaze upon the land they were approaching. As objects on the shore became clearer to his vision he saw a great rock many feet high, and standing by it was a man looking across the water watching the coming boat.

CHAPTER XIX

BATTLING FOR LIFE

When Wilfred fell stunned into the water he would inevitably have been drowned but for his servant's involuntary act. Judge, with no thought of what he was doing, sprang after his master, and clutching his arm went down with him beneath the black waters.

The *Agra* swept on, leaving them alone on the bosom of the ocean, battling against the elements for life. The plunge beneath the cold water revived Wilfred, and when he rose to the surface he tried to swim, but his right arm was injured and he was helpless. Judge, ashen with fear, and speechless, clung to him and kept him from sinking again. For Judge, like most young negroes who live near the river, could dive and swim with the ease of a water fowl.

The boat lost by the vessel in the collision drifted within a few feet of them, and Wilfred stretched out his uninjured hand and grasped the side. He tried to get in the boat but his arm was numb and he could not without help. If he could get Judge in both might be saved, but Judge clung to him with desperation, deaf to every command; he would not release his master and he would not try to climb into the boat.

The miserable hours passed and Wilfred gave

himself up for lost. At last he felt the strength returning to his arm; he tried to raise it, and to his great joy succeeded in getting his hand upon the boat, but not without excruciating pain. Now he felt there was a chance for life—slim indeed, but enough to hang a thread of hope on. If such a thing were possible, if such a thing could be done, he would manage to get into the boat!

The clouds had passed away with the storm, and a full moon threw a bright, cold light on the water, which no longer foamed and beat in mountainous waves, but moved slowly and smoothly, murmuring an unintelligible message to the castaways. Wilfred spoke to Judge; he would try once more to induce him to cling to the boat a moment. But Judge did not answer, except to mutter something about its being too early to make the fire for breakfast.

Wilfred turned as well as he could and looked at him; his head was drooping, his eyes closed; both hands were clasping a corner of his master's coat. Judge, overcome by fatigue, was sinking into a sleep of exhaustion.

Wilfred moved his right hand from the edge of the boat, and feeling in his pocket drew out his knife. He held it to his lips and with his teeth opened it. Then, still clinging with one hand, he drew the knife blade across his coat above Judge's hands, and when he heard the cloth beginning to tear he closed the knife by pressing the blade on the side of the boat and dropped it in his pocket. Then he put his hand around Judge's wrists and pressed downward heav-

ily, tearing the corner off his coat. He pulled him to the boat and put his hands on it and when he saw his fingers clamp the edge he released him.

It happened so quickly that the terrified servant had no time to struggle.

Wilfred, with an effort almost superhuman, drew himself into the boat; he lay on the bottom a moment breathless, but safe—with only a plank between him and certain destruction. Then, although he was well-nigh exhausted, he got up, and taking his coat off tied it around his servant's hands in such a way that he could not use them to draw him into the water again, and lifted him into the boat.

The night passed. Day dawned and deepened. Wilfred's eyes searched the boundless expanse of water for a vessel, but no blue smoke nor white sail appeared. He did not know, and he had no means of ascertaining, that the boat was out of the sea road, far from the track of vessels.

At the close of the second day the breeze died away and the boat rested on the water almost motionless. Wilfred began to feel the pangs of hunger and thirst, and Judge, who never missed three meals a day, was suffering intensely.

As the night advanced clouds arose, seemingly out of the ocean, and when morning dawned a heavy rain began to fall. Wilfred, directing Judge to follow him, held his hands out to catch the welcome drops which to his parched and swollen lips were sweeter than nectar.

The next day Judge lay on the bottom of the boat

moaning for something to eat. Wilfred looked at him in pity.

"How did you get into the water Monday night?" he asked. "Did you fall overboard?"

"Nosser," answered Judge; "I jumped."

"You jumped!" echoed Wilfred. "What do you mean?"

"Ef yer please, Marse Wilfred," he said, sitting up and wiping his face on his sleeve—"ef yer please, I didn' mean ter git yer inter no wusser trubble. But w'en de stick hit yer en yer keeled over I jumped in ter hol' yer outen de water, which I done. En de boat, stid ov waitin' fer us, went on en lef' us ter drown en den starve."

"You risked your life to save me, when you might have remained on the *Agra,* where you would have been safe and homeward bound instead of here starving?"

"I never t'ought ov nothin'," answered Judge; "but ef you is got ter stay here on dis water er settin' in er little boat waitin' fer er ship ter come erlong it's better fer me ter be here ter keep yer sperits up." And he laid his face on the floor and moaned for some of his mammy's biscuits and fried chicken.

Wilfred was silent. Despair was fast settling upon him; he had been drifting on the ocean four days without food or water save the one time when it rained. He could not guide the boat, he had no oar and no sail; he could only hope for help, which he knew must come soon or be too late. Starvation was upon them. Then like an inspiration the thought

came to him that he had read that small shell-fish sometimes fasten themselves on the sides of boats when becalmed. He remembered the case of the unfortunate passengers of the ill-fated *Proserpine*. He reached over and ran his fingers along the boat below the water. He felt something small and hard; he detached it and found it to be a barnacle; he searched farther and found one dozen, which he divided with his servant.

For fourteen days the boat drifted before the wind and the shell-fish which Wilfred took from its side was the only food they had. One day, when the sea was as smooth as polished glass and the boat barely moving on its surface, Wilfred saw, directly in the boat's course, an island rising out of the water. The wind freshened and the distance between them and the island rapidly grew less. The tide was running in, the frail boat was caught on the waves and rushed high on the beach.

The island on which Wilfred Lake was cast was one-half mile wide and one mile long. The birds, the water-fowls, and sea-lions were fearless, an unfailing sign that they were unacquainted with man. The island was fruitful. There was no longer danger of starving.

Wilfred left the boat and went in search of food and fresh water, Judge keeping close to him. He soon found a brook, cool and sparkling, and farther down the beach, buried in the white sand, he found a nest of turtle eggs.

He told Judge to gather a bundle of dry sticks and

make a fire to roast the eggs. And Judge—hungry, starving, emaciated—obeyed. He soon gathered the sticks and piled them, but he did not make a fire for a very good reason.

"Marse Wilfred," he called, "O Marse Wilfred, I can't make no fire—I ain't got nary match!" He wrung his hands and moaned:

"We has 'scaped de perils ov de water ter perish fer de lack ov one leetel match! Oh, ef I had only one ov de many what I's wasted eve'y mawnin' when I made de fire in de kitchin!"

Wilfred was coming from the sandy shore with the eggs in his hands when Judge's wailing reached him. His pinched, sunburned face turned pale, but he said no word. He always carried a match-safe in his pocket, but he did not expect to find it now after his terrible experience in the water. He put the eggs on the ground by the neatly-piled sticks, and slipping two fingers and a thumb in his pocket drew out the match-safe; he opened it and a sigh of relief came from his lips—it was half-full of perfectly dry matches.

He took out one, and striking it on the side of the box held the blazing match under the dry twigs. They began to burn and the fire was made—possibly the first ever made on that island in the memory of man.

After the eggs were cooked and eaten, Judge laid down close to the smoldering sticks and fell asleep. But Wilfred Lake walked for hours, a prey to gloomy thoughts. He was a prisoner on a desert

island, where the remainder of his life was likely to be spent.

He thought of his home, of Eva and the children, and a moan of anguish burst from his lips. Eva would never know his fate. Never dream that while she moaned for him, believing he lay fathoms deep beneath the water, he lived and battled for life on a tiny spot of earth in the heart of the ocean far removed from the known world.

He walked until overcome by weariness; exhausted nature demanded a rest and he sank upon the ground and slept.

The sun was high in the heavens when he was awakened by Judge calling him.

"See what I is got fer breakfast, Marse Wilfred!" he exclaimed with more cheerfulness than could have been expected under the circumstances. "In 'dition ter de aigs what you found I done cotch er duck en is br'iled it."

After breakfast Wilfred explored the island, but discovered no trace of human habitation or presence. He found several varieties of fruit suitable for food. He might live here more years than he had known; he might even complete man's allotted time!

On one side of the island, and opposite the place where the waves cast the boat, was a high rock overlooking the sea. And every morning Wilfred climbed to the summit, and all day long watched the ocean for a sail. But days, weeks, and months passed without bringing help. No rising smoke marred the blue of the sky. No vessel hastening to the

rescue cast shadows on the deeper blue of the sea! No messenger from the busy world disturbed the vast solitude!

A year passed by. Daily Wilfred climbed the rock and watched the sea, but hope was fast leaving him; and Judge, seeing despair so plainly written on his master's face, was troubled.

"Marse Wilfred," he said to himself, "is gwine ter give out 'fore de boat comes ef I don't git sumthin' better fer 'im ter eat 'sides fruit en aigs. It's more'n er week sence I cotch er duck, en young turkles is gittin' skurse. I'll slip easy-like ter de water en see ef I can't 'crease de bill-ov-fare."

His efforts were successful, but his master's despondency increased, and Judge would lie on the sand and weep.

One day, fifteen months after the tide cast the boat on the island, Wilfred saw a serpent-like thread rising from the sea to the sky. He gazed at it as if fascinated; it grew until it was as large as a man's finger, then as broad as a hand.

"It is smoke from a vessel," he thought, and tears, such as any man in a similar situation might have shed, rolled down his cheeks. By evening the smoke was pouring upward in volumes and showing black against the sky. As far across the water as the eyes could reach the *Aurora* appeared, a mere blot upon the ocean, but growing more distinct with every passing moment.

When darkness settled like a cloud between the watcher and the vessel she was three miles from the

shore. Morning revealed her, slowly drawing near, and sounding for hidden rocks as she came on.

When she was as close as it was deemed safe to bring her a boat was lowered and Seymour, with Philip and two seamen, sprang into it and rowed to the beach. Philip was the first to step on shore and clasp the hands of his friend, who had left the rock and come to meet him.

"Found at last!" cried Philip. "The island, the high rock, and the lonely watcher of Eugene's dream!"

When Judge first saw the yacht he was like to go wild with joy. He had been lying on the sand at the edge of the water, waiting for a young turtle to come close enough for him to put his hands under it and throw it on the ground; he caught the unwary reptile, and as he sprang up he saw the *Aurora* approaching. He dashed away, leaving the turtle forever safe from him.

"Marse Wilfred," he cried as he ran, "Marse Wilfred! the boat what I tole yer erbout is done come! We is saved! we is saved!"

He laughed and cried and shouted, but his master said no word. He came down from the rock where so many lonely hours had been spent and stood waiting.

"My family?" were the first words Wilfred spoke.

"We left them nearly two months ago. They will be all right when you return," Seymour answered. "I dare say," he added, speaking lightly to hide his emotion, "that you are ready to leave this island

where you have been 'monarch of all you surveyed'; at any rate, we have come for you."

"You have come for me!" repeated Wilfred in amazement. "Your stopping at this island was not mere chance?"

"Not by any means!" returned Seymour. "But come on. Philip will tell you all about it when we are on board the *Aurora*."

"You are not alone, Wilfred?" asked Philip. "I understood your servant was with you."

"Here I is, Marse Philip, and mighty proud ter see yer!" said Judge, coming forward and speaking for himself.

"Now," said Seymour, when Philip had explained to Wilfred why they came to search for him, "we will go to Rio and cable to Mrs. Lake."

But Eva did not get the message; it was mislaid in the office and never sent.

On the morning of June the thirteenth Eva, with her children around her, sat in the room where she received Captain Langley fifteen months ago.

She held Eugene in her arms. He was ill and restless; it was evident to the mother that he was failing fast and her heart was aching.

"Mother," he said, "it is time Cousin Philip was coming home with father."

Before she could answer him a step sounded in the hall, the door opened, and with the same cry which burst from her lips when Captain Langley left the room, Eva sprang up:

"Wilfred! O Wilfred! Wilfred!"

CHAPTER XX

UNCLE JASPER REPENTS

And down in the kitchen that night, when Judge, the returned hero, was gone to Oakland to see his friend Sam, Uncle Jasper sat and smoked his pipe.

"Phebe," he said, "yer may 'member w'at I promised 'cernin' dat boy w'en he 'turned back home; meanin' w'ich I wus er gwine ter wake him up good. Now, don' 'rupt me twell I has 'journed what I has ter say."

But Aunt Phebe was not to be silenced.

"It would be onfeelin', Jasper," she exclaimed, "ter lay de line on him now! 'Sider his 'sperience."

" 'Sideration ov his 'sperience is what'll save 'im," Uncle Jasper replied. "Likewise his savin' ov Marse Wilfred. Whar' would Marse Wilfred hev bin now, en time en ergin, ef Jedge hadn' er bin dar er keepin' his sperits up? He's bin tellin' it en de story's like ter grow.

" 'Sides, Marse Wilfred hisse'f says he didn' know nuffin' w'en he fell in de water, en w'en he come ter his senses Jedge wus er holdin' ter 'im.

"Well, Phebe, I's rastled over de sitivation, en I has 'rove at de 'pinion dat de promise is gone outen date—it don' lack but t'ree mont's ov bein' two year sence it wus made. En, Phebe, not ter mek de story long, I's 'pented. I forego de fulfilmen' ov de prom-

iss; but I won' let 'im know it; I'll keep de threat er hangin' ober him en I'll likewise keep de line er hangin' on de nail ter be used on er later 'casion ef de 'sperience is ever repeated."

CHAPTER XXI

A MESSENGER

"I do not promise," said Philip gravely, "that the visit to the Virginia mountains will effect a cure, but I advise you to take him there without delay. The change will benefit him if anything can; the battle is between nature and disease. It is but little that a physician can do for him.

"My mother leaves in a few days for Rainbow Hill, where Seymour and his bride are spending their honeymoon with Charley and Mrs. Dalton. It is a beautiful place as well as a famous summer resort. You can hire a private cottage a quarter of a mile from the hotel and have all the quiet necessary for your sick child."

"We will go at once," answered Wilfred. "And, Philip, will you accompany us?"

Philip did not want to do so. For although he knew Valerie was in New York with Dora Calvert, he feared that if Eugene continued to grow worse Eva would send for her, and he did not want to meet her. But he was not one to think of his own feelings when duty called him. He knew that he could make the journey easier for Eugene and he consented to go with him and remain a few days.

He believed the case was hopeless, that no earthly skill could save his life. Yet the instincts of the true

physician prompted him to meet the messenger of death and fight to the end.

Three days later, a sultry July morning, Uncle Jasper brought the open carriage to the door. Wilfred, with Eva and Eugene, entered it and were driven to Oakland.

And following them in another carriage came Mammy with Bertie and Baby Eva; and on the front seat by the driver sat Judge with a covered basket at his feet. It appeared to have an occupant, and if any one had been inquisitive concerning it he had only to raise the cover to see Mitts, excited and indignant, within the basket.

Aunt Phebe had tried to keep the dog until Bertie was out of sight, and had closed him up. But Mitts did not want to stay with her; he jumped through the window, breaking the glass, and ran to the carriage, and climbing up the steps nestled in Bertie's arms.

Judge, without consulting any one, hurried into the house to get something to put him in. He found his mother's work-basket, and emptying its contents on a chair, he hastened back to the waiting carriage, and putting Mitts in the basket closed the lid.

Mrs. Stanley and Philip were waiting at the station for the Lakes; they went on the train together, and thirty hours later reached their destination.

A thunderstorm had passed over the mountains earlier in the afternoon, leaving the atmosphere clear, pure, and bracing. The sun shining through the departing clouds played upon the rain drops hanging on

the leaves of the mountain trees. And as the breeze moved them they glittered as if decked with sparkling jewels.

As the travelers from the extreme South, the home of the mocking-bird and whippoorwill, and the land where cotton is king, drove along the road leading from the town to the mountain side where the hotel and cottages were built, they passed acres of ripening wheat and great fields of broad-leaved tobacco; and so quickly had the change been made that it seemed as if a magician's wand had been waved, a word of command spoken, and the one picture rose as the other vanished.

High up the mountain another picture came into view, a picture which must thrill the heart of every lover of nature—a rain-bow, bright, brilliant, every color clear and distinct, appeared, one end seemingly resting on the mountain-side, the other lost in the clouds. And beneath it, in the valley far below, lay a small lake, the headwaters of a great river.

"Look, Eugene," said Philip, "I want you to see a beautiful rainbow. Can you tell me what causes it?"

Eugene looked at it in silence until it began to fade. Then he answered Philip's question.

"Oh, yes, Cousin Philip," he said gravely, "I know about the rainbow. It was placed in the heavens as a reminder of the promise given by the Maker of the universe that the world would no more be destroyed by a flood. And when we see it we know that He remembers."

Philip was silent. What reply could cold silence make!

For a few days Eugene seemed to grow stronger, and hope beat anew in the hearts of those who loved him. But a change for the worse soon came. Once he went to play with Bertram and Baby Eva on the grass under the locust trees which grew in front of the cottage. But he became so weary that Wilfred took him in his arms and carried him into the house.

Judge was sent for Philip, who was staying at the hotel.

"You remember," Philip said when he came, "that I did not bid you hope. Eugene has never been like other children. He has the knowledge, not gained from books, and the mental faculty, the soul of one nearing the end of a long life. Who but one whose sight was clear, one on the verge of the spirit world, could have had the vision which rescued you from an unknown island?"

"But are not physicians sometimes mistaken?" asked Wilfred.

"Times without number," answered Philip.

The days passed by and Eugene's weakness steadily increased.

The father and mother hung over him with hearts full of anguish. They knew that the crisis was approaching; for weeks the angel of Life and the angel of Death had been hovering near him. They would meet now, and the final battle would be fought.

One July day, when the sky was bluest, when the

breeze stirred the leaves and filled the air with the perfume of wild flowers, Wilfred stood by Eva as she held the sick child in her arms. For days he had been restless, his sleep broken. He closed his eyes now, as if in slumber, but only for a moment, then his blue eyes opened and he looked into the faces bending over him.

"You will plant roses on my grave, mother," he said, and smiled.

She answered with tears and a caress.

Slowly the dear little head drooped until it rested on his mother's arms, which enfolded him as if she would hold and keep him forever.

Again he slept; the smile still on his face as the angels whispered to him. Suddenly the smile faded and he awakened with a shudder.

"What is it, my darling? Mother will fold you closer to her heart."

"O mother," he answered, "I dreamed that I was with the angels, but my body rested in the grave where sweet flowers bloomed around me; and a little bird came and sang, oh, so sweet a song! But one day a party of grown people and some little children like me walked among the graves and gathered the flowers and the little bird flew away. It hurt me, mother, oh, it hurt me!

"Why will they not gather other flowers and leave the ones which bloom in God's acre to shed their sweet leaves on the ground above those who sleep. Will you promise me, father, mother," he said, holding out a hand to each, "that you will not again

gather the flowers nor use the cedars as you once did?"

And weeping, they promised.

Never again will that father and mother, as so many thoughtlessly do, desecrate the sacred spot where rests all that is mortal of those who but yesterday walked with us, those who to-day walk the streets of Jerusalem, the City of Life Eternal, where the night of sorrow and death cometh no more forever and where the pure in heart behold the face of the dear Lord Who doeth all things well.

"When the cold winter comes and the flowers fade and die, your heart will ache for me, dear mother. You will long to fold me in your arms once more as you do now. But you cannot—never on earth again. Only in your dreams will you behold your child.

"But come to my grave when the spring sunshine warms the sleeping flowers into new life and they, as they lift their heads above the brown mold, and the budding trees and all nature, will whisper to you of the glorious resurrection, and you will be comforted. I shall come to you no more, but some day God will send his messenger for you and you will come to me. I am tired now, and must sleep."

He closed his eyes and the angel of Life and the angel of Death strove for him, the one to keep him on earth yet a while longer, the other battling to seal his lips and bear his spirit across the dread river and into the realms of Light.

He lay in his mother's arms, his eyes closed, the breath fluttering across his lips.

Philip bent over him, his fingers on the slender wrist.

"He sleeps," he said; "he will live!"

And weeping bitterly, the angel of Death, the beautiful angel of perfect love, departed.

CHAPTER XXII

A CRY FOR HELP

The opal was fading. There was no doubt of it. For three days Valerie had watched its brilliant lights grow dim and her heart was full of a nameless dread. Could it be that some evil threatened Philip? She did not know where he was. He was nothing to her, she told herself, and never could be again. She had loved him devotedly, passionately, but she believed that he had been playing with her heart; even while he was betrothed to her he was, according to Mrs. Gray, in love with Jenny Seymour. And after Jenny's marriage to Charley Dalton there was that later report about him and Miss Morton. And since she had been in New York Margaret Calvert told her that Miss Morton had returned from a long sojourn in France and Doctor Morton had immediately written to Philip notifying him of the fact.

Oh, yes, she had closed her heart against him. He was nothing to her—and yet she watched the fading opal, which she could not take from her finger, with a sinking heart.

She was at Saratoga now, with Dora, and Margaret Calvert, and nothwithstanding she was called the coldest, proudest girl there, she was the reigning favorite. Her friends loved her; acquaintances admired her, and strangers turned to look again at the

lovely Southern girl with brilliant, starry black eyes, and wonderful roses in her cheeks, that defied wind and water.

She was crossing the ball-room on Jeffrey Calvert's arm one evening nearly a week after the opal began to fade, when a fragment of a conversation reached her. Two gentlemen were walking a few steps in advance of her and Calvert.

"The evening paper is filled with it," one was saying. " 'A Cry for Help' is the rather startling headline. Poor, stricken people. I pity them. I could go if I could leave my post at the hospital, but that is quite impossible just now. A young friend of mine, Philip Stanley, is down there and doing heroic work."

They passed on, and as soon as she could get away Valerie went to her room and rang the bell.

"Bring me the evening paper," she said to the maid who answered the summons.

The woman looked at her oddly.

What could the young lady want with a paper when new books were lying on the table, she wondered; but she went away and soon returned with a bundle of papers, which she laid by the side of the books and withdrew.

Valerie opened one; on the first page she found it—"A Cry for Help." She read it through and the paper fell from her hands.

Yellow fever was raging in Portland-on-the-Bay. Vessels running between the coast and the West Indies had brought the scourge and before the authori-

ties were aware of its presence it had secured a firm foothold.

"Send us physicians and send us nurses," she read, taking up the paper again. "The number of nurses in proportion to the sick is sadly inadequate, and the local physicians are almost exhausted by the constant calls upon them. Help must come and come quickly to save the stricken city.

"Philip Stanley is here and doing noble work; he was one of the first to respond to the call a week ago."

She glanced farther down the column and read:

"A relief train carrying physicians and nurses will leave New York at ten o'clock to-morrow morning for Portland-on-the-Bay, where yellow fever has broken out. Sister Agnes, whose work of charity is world-wide, goes with them."

Valerie stood a moment, her eyes burning, her face pale.

"I know Sister Agnes," she thought; "I shall go with her."

She consulted a time-table and found that a train would leave the station in half an hour. She changed her white silk for a dark-blue cloth costume; then she wrote a note, and taking it in her hand went to Dora's room and knocked.

No one bade her enter. Dora had not yet returned. Valerie went in and laid the note on the dressing-table. Then she left the hotel and hurried to the station.

She arrived in New York in time to leave on the

relief train, and forty-eight hours later reached Portland-on-the-Bay. The party left the train at the Union Depot and went at once to the City Hospital, where they were welcomed by the board of health, now represented by gray-haired Doctor Drayton, who had left his work in Mobile to come and help fight the fever. He told them that their coming had brought timely relief, and sent them out into the poor districts of the city to begin their work of mercy.

Most of the wealthiest residents left the place when the first whisper of danger went abroad, and the silence, the closed doors and barred windows of the deserted homes gave one the impression of walking through a sleeping city.

The heat was intense; the sun beat with relentless rays on the paved streets. Not a cloud moved across the sky and not a leaf trembled in the breeze.

But out in the park the mocking-birds still sang, and the whippoorwills called when the evening shadows grew long.

Before coming to Portland-on-the-Bay Valerie knew nothing of the awful fever; but now she went fearlessly into the poor homes where it raged, and ministered to the stricken ones.

Some one in the first days of her work had called her "Sister Grace," and the name clung to her.

She had been in the city ten days and not once had she seen Philip Stanley, but everywhere she went she heard his name praised.

One day as she was hurrying to obey a call she met

Amos Holton, the fisherman who had rescued her the day of the accident on the bay.

"Lady," he cried, "what are you doing here?"

"I answered a cry for help," she said. "I am needed here."

"You are brave, lady. My wife and I heard the cry, too," he said, "and left our home in Mobile to come and help. But with you it is different."

He had turned and was walking by her side.

"Can you tell me where I can find Sister Grace? Doctor Drayton and Sister Agnes have sent me for her. Another—this time one of our best workers—is stricken and they have sent for her."

"I am called 'Sister Grace,'" she answered. "If the need is urgent let us hasten."

"The need *is* urgent," he replied. "Lady, you will know how great is the misfortune that has befallen the people to-day when I tell you that the one who has done more work among the poor, and the one who has saved more lives than half a dozen others, is now stricken with the fever and lies at death's door."

He mentioned no name and Valerie did not know that she was hurrying to Philip.

Doctor Drayton and Sister Agnes did not know that the two had ever met, and sent for her because the three had helped each other with many a desperate case.

"Lady," said Amos Holton when they reached the hospital door, "Mary Belle told me to say to you that she wants you to let her know just as soon as you

feel the fever burning in your veins, and she will come to you. I do not want to alarm you, but every one who has not once had the fever is liable to fall a victim to it, and my wife can outwit the plague as well as a doctor."

Valerie thanked him and ran up the steps.

Holton stood looking after her as she disappeared within the hall.

"The time draws near," he said; "she will have the fever in a few days. I must tell Mary Belle to make ready for her, and I will come back here and watch."

As Valerie walked down the hall a door opened and Doctor Drayton came to meet her.

"Child," he said gravely, "you should not have come to this city."

She looked up and smiled.

"I hoped I might do some good," she said.

"Only one has done more," he answered, "but I fear his work is ended, though I shall do my utmost to save him and you must help me. Do you know," he added, "that I have had another letter from your brother entreating, commanding me to send you home. But what can I do? You cannot leave the city, as every place is quarantined against us."

"Telegraph to him as often as you can," she said; "I cannot leave yet, my work is not finished. I must stay to the end."

"Come in here," said the Doctor, opening the door. "Sister Agnes is waiting for you. I must visit other patients now and will return as soon as I can."

Valerie went in. Her face paled and her lips tightened as her eyes rested on Philip lying on a cot in the middle of the room, the lids drooping over his steel-blue eyes, his once fair face as yellow as autumn leaves.

It was thus that she saw him for the first time since that April morning six months ago when he stood in the doorway of her vine-clad bower.

She did not see Sister Agnes, who was sitting by the patient, until she arose and beckoned to her.

"He came here this morning in answer to a call from Doctor Drayton," said Sister Agnes, "and when he was leaving to return to his work in the poor district he grew dizzy and would have fallen had not willing hands caught him and laid him here. He is desperately ill, Valerie; I fear the fight to save him will be in vain."

Valerie did not seem to hear her. The hour she feared had come!

With an effort which drove the life-blood from her face she controlled every emotion. She went to the open window and leaned a moment against the casement.

The white muslin curtains were lowered to keep out the glare of the sun; they hung straight and motionless; there was not breeze enough stirring to disturb their soft folds.

"Sister Agnes," she said as she left the window, "will you call me Sister Grace? I like the name and have grown accustomed to it."

Sister Agnes promised to do as she wished.

Philip was delirious. He grew restless and began to talk at random.

Doctor Drayton came back, and hour after hour, and inch by inch, through the day and all night long, they contested with the fever without gaining any advantage.

"If this restlessness is not controlled," said Doctor Drayton, "he cannot live through the day. I have exhausted every means in my power without giving him relief."

"Valerie's face grew yet paler; she went to the bedside, and taking the hot, dry hands in hers, bent over him and spoke one word.

Philip stared at her, but with no gleam of recognition in his eyes. He lay still a moment and listened; then he turned impatiently to Doctor Drayton and Sister Agnes.

"The Queen of the Rose-buds called me," he said, "but I believe no more in voices and visions. Do you know her?" he asked suddenly. "Then I pity you," he said, not waiting for an answer, "for the Queen of the Rose-buds is surrounded with thorns. I know, for the thorns have torn my heart and Miss Morton had to bind it up with violets. Violets? No —not violets! Why, what nonsense you talk. I'll not waste any more words with you."

Valerie heard and understood the muttered words, and a sharper pain could not have pierced her heart had a two-edged sword been thrust through it.

Philip began to move; the restlessness was returning.

"Miss Morton has returned," he said. "I must go to her." And he tried to get up.

"Speak to him," said the Doctor; "keep him quiet if possible."

Valerie whispered his name again. For two days she stayed by him, and only her presence, the touch of her hand controlled him. The sound of her voice was like magic in its effect upon him; it soothed and quieted him when all else failed. At last his bright eyes closed and he slept.

"He is saved," said Doctor Drayton. "He will awaken in his right mind.

The Doctor went away and Valerie sat by Philip for hours, watching his face and the opal on her finger. As the color slowly crept back to his lips and brow the brilliancy returned to the opal.

"He will live," she thought, "and I have helped to save him."

But Doctor Drayton and Sister Agnes knew that she had done more than help.

"Sister Agnes," said Valerie, when the time drew near for Philip to awaken, "I am going to the home of Mary Belle Holton for a day's rest. "And please remember that I am only 'Sister Grace' to Doctor Stanley."

"There is no need for you to work longer," said Sister Agnes. "There has not been a new case of fever in two days. Stay here."

But Valerie shook her head and went out. She felt that she could not remain under the same roof which sheltered Philip. She knew that she loved

him yet, and would love him always, while he cared only for Miss Morton; and she had saved him for her.

It is hard to banish affection which has become deeply rooted, but Valerie told herself she would tear this love from her heart, and she would never forgive Philip for playing with her heart that beautiful summer. Oh! never, never!

She left the hospital and walked through the wide grounds to the gate; and any one to see her now would never dream that any sorrow except such as she felt for others ever touched her. Whatever she felt was locked within her breast.

She opened the gate and passed out. Half a block from the hospital, as she was passing a neat cottage, Amos Holton overtook her, his honest, elderly face aglow with pleasure.

"It's proud I am to see you, lady," he said.

She smiled faintly.

"I am weary, Amos Holton," she said. "I would rest awhile."

Without a word he ran up the steps and threw open the cottage door.

"Mary Belle!" he called; and instantly a woman joined him and together they went to Valerie. Mrs. Holton put her arm around her and led her into the cottage.

"We moved here two days ago," she said; "and I have had Amos walking up and down the street in front of the hospital ever since, waiting for you."

Valerie had met Mrs. Holton, who was an experi-

enced nurse, many times during the past weeks, and the elder woman had felt much sympathy for the young lady, forced, as she thought, to earn her living by such hard work. She knew nothing of Valerie's circumstances and was judging her by appearances. She led her into a room, and drawing a couch to the open window placed Valerie upon it.

"Lie here and rest, Sister Grace," she said, using the only name she had heard given her, while to Amos she was the "brave young lady" he had rescued from the water.

The next morning Valerie was very ill, and Mrs. Holton sent for Doctor Drayton, who came, bringing one of the best nurses with him to help Mrs. Holton with her charge. He knew that he had another desperate case to battle with and he feared he could not win, as Valerie's strength was almost spent.

She had the fever in its most malignant form, and only once did he leave her. He had to go to Philip, who was not yet out of danger. For when Philip awakened and consciousness returned he had a dim recollection that Valerie had been with him, but as he did not know that she was in the city he thought he had been dreaming. He asked Sister Agnes who had been with him and she told him, mentioning Valerie as "Sister Grace."

"And who is Sister Grace?" he asked. "I have heard of her often while I worked, but I never met her—her work lay in another part of the city. Who is Sister Grace, and why did she come to me? Tell me, Sister Agnes."

"Sister Grace came with me from New York, but what her name was before she began this work I may not tell you. She came to help with you because I sent for her, with Doctor Drayton's approval; he had seen her with the fever patients and knew that she could be depended upon."

Philip was not satisfied. Although he believed she was in Oakland, safe from the fever, he could not banish the thought that Valerie had been with him and he grew restless. Sister Agnes, fearing he would have a relapse, sent for Doctor Drayton.

"What is the meaning of this, Stanley?" the Doctor exclaimed, bustling into the room. "You were doing well enough when I left you yesterday."

Philip tried to smile.

"Is there much fever in the city now, Doctor?" he asked.

"Only one new case in five days," was the answer. "The worst is past, although Sister Grace has the fever in its most dangerous form and is desperately ill."

Philip's lips trembled.

"Tell me about her, Doctor. Sister Agnes says she was with me. She came from New York, I believe?"

"Yes," answered Doctor Drayton; "she came here with the relief train from New York, although she was not immune. It is to her that you owe your life. I cannot tell you much about her as I never saw her before she came to Portland-on-the-Bay three weeks ago.

"She has, or had, another name, but you are aware that most of the sisters prefer to work under assumed names. She is known as 'Sister Grace' to the people here."

Doctor Drayton knew that Valerie did not want Philip to know her name, consequently would give him no information concerning her.

"And now she is ill," said Philip. "Doctor, I must go and help you with her; it is my duty to do so."

"Impossible," exclaimed Doctor Drayton. "You cannot walk across the floor. Your first duty is to regain a little strength and change this yellow complexion for one somewhat whiter. Stanley," he said gravely, "you are a physician; you know what the result of the slightest imprudence would be. How many yellow fever patients survive a relapse? Will you remain here a few days longer and implicitly obey Sister Agnes while I go back to my latest patient?"

"I suppose I must," said Philip wearily. "I can only sit here and wait."

"The very best thing to do in many cases," said Doctor Drayton. "Milton says 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' The lines are applicable in more senses than one."

And with the last words he left the room and returned to Valerie.

It was the same story told again, that battle with the fever. For hours she lay between life and death, and the doctor and nurse knew not which would be

victorious. At length the critical hour came, was passed, and she lived—but so weak, so spent that a breath might have wafted her away. But strength returned rapidly after the fever left her, and in two weeks she left Portland-on-the-Bay and went to New York with Sister Agnes; Doctor Drayton advising her to go to a colder climate until winter.

Before Valerie left the city she purchased the cottage in which Amos Holton and his wife lived and made them a present of it. Mrs. Holton laughed and cried at the same time when Valerie laid the deed in her lap.

"And I believed you were working from necessity," she said, "and my heart went out to you as you went daily among the suffering people. And Amos and me watched over you, wishing to help you, yet not knowing how until we saw you were sure to have the fever; and we thought it would be best for you to bring you to our house. Oh, what a mistake we made, thinking you were quite poor when you are able to give us this house."

"You have done as much for me," Valerie answered; and bidding them good-by, she left them and with Sister Agnes went to New York.

It was more than two weeks before Philip recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital.

"I must see Sister Grace to-day," he said to Doctor Drayton the morning he left his room. "I want to thank her for what she has done for me."

"But you cannot," answered Doctor Drayton; "she left yesterday for New York."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CLOSING SCENE

For hours Philip walked among the water-oaks where the calycanthus bloomed. Mocking-birds sleeping in the branches which waved in the moonlight were awakened and watched him with bright eyes. Whippoorwills called, and a snail, one inch in length, with all the speed for which they are renowned, was hastening across the grass on its way to the garden, where cultivated and tender plants grew.

When the snail reached the path it paused and waited for Philip to pass before it began the journey to reach the other side. But it had traveled no more than four inches of the distance when the steps returned and it drew into its shell. When it thought the way was clear it came out to resume the journey, but the danger was nearing again. And mindful of its life, for life is sweet to everything, even the smallest and lowest, the snail waited. An hour passed and still it waited. Another hour came, and despairing of reaching the garden by this near and direct way, it turned, with its house on its back, to retrace its steps across the grass.

The way was long and toilsome. The circuit of the lawn had to be made. But just before the day dawned it crept into the garden and climbed into a bunch of tender lettuce.

And Philip, unconscious of the journey he had given the creeping thing, walked on. He was thinking of Valerie, whom he loved with a passion which no time could dim, which nothing could efface.

He could not forget her. Her face was before him always, through his work, and in his idle moments. He was not often in Oakland now; his fame had spread and most of his work was done in hospitals. As soon as he could after the fever in Portland-on-the-Bay he went to New York, where he worked until January, when he came to Oakland on a visit to his mother.

The first of February he was called to Mobile. While in the latter city he met his humble friend, Amos Holton, who asked him about Sister Grace.

Philip replied that he knew nothing of her, and excepting the time he had yellow fever, and of which he had no recollection, he had never seen her.

Amos Holton looked at him in amazement.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" he said.

Philip flushed.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean," answered Holton, "that she is no other than the lady who came within an inch of being drowned in the bay several years ago while you and another gentleman went to the rescue of her friend. But if you didn't know it I don't know as I ought to have told you."

"I did not know," answered Philip quietly.

As a result of this information he went to Oakland determined to go to Valerie again. More than

a year had elapsed since he returned from the Arctic Circle, and only once had he seen her, save the time he was ill and unconscious.

"I will go to Lakeview in the morning," he thought, "and if she sends me from her again I will put the breadth of the world between us and return only at long intervals for a day with my mother. But I shall plead no more."

The next morning Valerie sat in her favorite bower. In front of her was a long table strewn from end to end with roses, lilies, and violets which she was arranging in baskets to send to the sick in the Oakland Hospital.

A shadow fell across the doorway. She looked up to see Philip standing before her.

He looked at her and the flowers scattered around her.

"Valerie," he said, "one morning, four years ago, the morning I placed the opal on your finger, I found you here, surrounded as now, by the flowers you love so well. You came to meet me, the love light in your eyes." He held out his hands. "Will you come to me now, and make the life you have saved worth living? I have seen Amos Holton. O Valerie, you still wear the opal! Did you come to me because you loved me?"

"He knows I love him yet; he is grateful and would reward me," she thought bitterly, her face white. "But he belongs to Miss Morton now, I will not come between them. *I cannot forget!*"

And all the pride of a long line of proud ancestors,

intensified in her heart, awakened and aided her. With a smile on her lips, although her heart was aching, she arose.

"I promised to go to Oakland with a party of friends this morning," she said. "I must leave you now."

Philip went to her side, and taking her hands in his held them firmly.

"If any one had told me two years ago that such words as I am going to say to you would ever pass my lips, even to gain the love of the only woman in the world for me, I would have laughed the idea to scorn. But love works wonders with the proudest hearts!

"Valerie, I came here to-day to plead with you for the last time, to implore you to have compassion on me and on yourself—for you will suffer, too, my darling. Think of the lonely years in store for both, for while you wear my opal you will love no one else.

"You cannot take it from your finger, and I will never remove it until you comply with the conditions. You and I will walk separate paths; gathering thorns instead of flowers. Speak to me, Valerie! Bid me stay."

She was silent, her heart beating slowly, painfully, as she thought of the words she heard Mrs. Gray speak which had first planted the seeds of doubt in her bosom; and again, that evening in Marsville when she stood in the conservatory by the oleander and listened to the music. Those idle, gossiping words had raised a barrier which she could not sur-

mount. And Philip, her hero, had refused to deny them, telling her she must trust him.

She could not—she would not. Her heart might break, but she would not yield.

"I told you one year ago that I had nothing to say to you. Need I add more?"

As long as she lived she remembered the expression of pain which swept over Philip's face.

"It is enough," he answered. "I shall not trouble you to repeat the words either now or hereafter."

He released her hands and turned away, but came back and folded her passionately to his heart, kissing her lips again and again.

He looked into her cold, proud face, and his arms dropped to his side.

"Forgive me, my darling," he said. "I could not help it; but I promise never to touch your hands or your lips again until you give me leave. I am going away, to the uttermost parts of the earth it may be—I care not where. But I will come when yellow jasmine blooms again, and stand here beneath this vine-clad roof where we have known both joy and sorrow, and if love has conquered pride, Valerie, darling, you will come to me and give me one of the kisses I leave upon your lips to-day."

She felt the pride which had grown, and like a noxious weed smothered every loving impulse of her heart, giving away, but she would not yield, and turning abruptly, left him.

Philip stood a moment, motionless, then stretched

out his arms as if he would implore her to stay—but she was gone.

A spray of yellow jasmine which she held in her hand had fallen at his feet; he picked it up and put it in his pocket. He sank upon the rustic bench and buried his face on the flower-laden table.

He was roused at last by Sir Colin pushing his nose in his hand. He arose, and mounting Stella rode away. Two hours later he was on the northbound train on the way to New York, where he took passage on the *Indian Queen* bound for the South Sea Islands.

When Philip was gone past recall restlessness and remorse took possesion of Valerie. She wept until the fountain of her tears was exhausted. She found it almost more than she could do to smile and appear her old, bright self; but she struggled, and hid the pain as only a woman can, and no one dreamed that she needed a word or a helping hand. She was never idle. Her hands always found something to do. She visited the sick and poor and busied herself in every charitable work, and waited, never doubting that Philip would return and the days would be filled with happiness as they were that summer long ago. For now love had conquered pride and the longing to see his face, to hear his voice, grew terrible in its intensity.

Philip's heart and soul were calling and hers responded. No one ever spoke his name to her and she knew not in what part of the world he wandered. The days passed; the summer came and went. Au-

tumn waned, winter drew near, and her eyes grew brighter as she counted the weeks.

For with the first breath of spring the jasmine would bloom and when the southern breeze was laden with its fragrance Philip would come.

The first of January Dora Calvert, who had been visiting friends in Oakland, returned to her home in New York, taking Valerie with her.

It was during this latter stay in the city that Valerie learned from Margaret Calvert the true story of Philip's visits to Miss Morton. They were driving in the park one day when Margaret called Valerie's attention to a lady passing in an open carriage.

"Look, Valerie! In the carriage to the right," she said. "That is Miss Morton, the lady who owes her life to the skill of Doctor Stanley of your city. Two years ago she was a frail, delicate girl, whom the physicians declared could not live; but Doctor Stanley believed her case was not hopeless. He began to treat her and time has proved that he was right. She returned from France a few months ago completely cured, her mother tells me."

Valerie looked after the passing carriage and recognized in Miss Morton the girl she saw leaning on Philip's arm the day she returned from London.

"I believed the words I heard were true," she thought sadly, "and I saw Philip with this girl; his manner was careful, almost tender. Yet how could I have doubted him?"

One morning Valerie stood on the balcony overlooking the garden, watching the rising sun. She stretched out her hand to put back a vine and her eyes rested on the opal. It was glowing—brilliant—beautiful. She smiled and pressed her lips upon it, and the next moment an icy wave swept over her, leaving her faint and trembling. For instantly, like the bursting of a bubble, the life, the light, save a single spark, died out of the opal, leaving it dull, colorless.

"O Philip, Philip!" she cried in a voice of anguish. Her heart told her he was in peril.

Once before she had seen the opal fade, but not as now. Then the lights had slowly, gradually grown dim. But now the change was instantaneous, as if a veil had been drawn before the sun, shutting out its rays. Two days she watched and waited for a summons she felt was coming. And only those whose absent loved ones are out of reach and in known peril can understand how bitterly she suffered.

Never had time passed for her so slowly, so wearily, as if with leaden feet. Had she known where Philip was she would have hurried to him, even to the uttermost end of the world.

On the morning of the third day after the opal faded Valerie picked up a two-day old paper which lay unopened on the table. She unfolded it and on the first page read in large letters:

"FEARFUL ACCIDENT ON THE CENTRAL PACIFIC RAILROAD TWENTY MILES EAST OF SACRAMENTO."

She glanced down the column, her heart full of pity for the unfortunate victims. At the close a paragraph attracted closer attention:

"Among the fatally injured is one man, evidently a gentleman, whose case is extremely sad. He was taken to the hospital unconscious, in which condition he remains. It is doubtful if he lives through the night. The authorities cannot notify his friends as there were no letters or papers on his person by which to identify him.

"Nothing was found in his pocket except a lady's broken fan and a cluster of withered flowers. He has spoken only once since the accident: 'When the jasmine blooms I will come again, Valerie, darling.' "

Valerie read the words; they were meaningless to her. She read them again, and as their awful import impressed itself upon her brain she sprang to her feet and stood erect, slender and tall, one hand pressed against her wildly beating heart as if she would control its throbbing. Every vestige of color faded from her face, leaving it as still and white as sculptured marble. Only her wonderful eyes grew larger and brighter, until they shone like stars.

Mechanically she left the room and slowly, as one in a dream, descended the stairs and walked into the room where Dora was sitting.

She stood in the doorway, the fatal paper in her hand.

Dora turned and looked at her. She never forgot the sparkling of her wide-open, brilliant black eyes, which seemed to look though without seeing her. Involuntarily she threw her hands to her face to shut out the sight. Then she ran to her.

"O Valerie!" she cried. "What has happened to hurt you so cruelly?"

"Philip!" she whispered. "I must go to him!"

She wavered and would have fallen had not Dora thrown her arms around her.

"Will you help me, Dora?" she asked. "I must leave at once for California. Two days ago Philip was fatally injured in a railroad wreck. He is dying—perhaps dead—I am going to him."

She put the paper in Dora's hand.

"Read this," she said.

"Valerie," said Dora, when she had glanced down the column, "there is no mention here of Philip Stanley, either among the killed or injured. And even if you were sure of finding him, do you not understand, dear, that you cannot make such a journey across the continent alone? Your brother and sister would not approve of it and Hugh and I cannot consent to your going."

"Oh, do not try to dissuade me!" Valerie cried passionately. "I shall go, though all the world oppose me!"

It was in vain that Hugh and Dora counselled and pleaded with her. She was deaf to every word they

uttered. She listened quietly, without hearing, until they exhausted every argument to induce her to give up the journey.

"Hugh Calvert," she said, "I must have a special train within two hours. You can procure it for me with less difficulty than I. Will you do so?"

"I will try," he answered, "although it seems impossible."

But it was not, and at the end of the specified time Valerie was on the train speeding Westward. To her the miles crept by, but certain it is that mile posts have seldom been passed so quickly.

The scene changed, bringing new and rare pictures. But the unhappy girl staring out of the window saw nothing of the beauties through which she was passing as the train rushed onward toward the land of the setting sun.

"O Philip, Philip!" was the cry of her heart day and night.

The mountains were reached, climbed, and left behind. Then began the race across the plains, once the home of the Indian and buffalo, but to-day dotted with populous villages and busy cities.

Both Indians and buffalos are gone now—the Indian giving way before the Caucasian and the buffalo slaughtered, as civilization advanced, by cruel, heartless hunters.

Another day passed and the journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific was finished, and Valerie, alone in a strange land, left the train and made her way to

the hospital where the victims of the wreck were being care for.

Philip lived, she knew, for a single spot of light still burned in the opal, which she had watched with burning, tearless eyes every day and hour.

"He has had a close call," she heard a familiar voice saying; "but the danger is passed and he will live in spite of the doctor's decree that there was no chance for him. And nothing but his iron will, his determination to get home while the jasmine is in bloom has saved him."

The voice was Seymour's. Valerie clasped her hands to her heart and stopped as a girl came to meet her, and in a moment Lily's arms were around her.

She spoke no word; she asked no question, and Lily, knowing why she had come, led her to an open door.

"He is here," she said, and left her.

Valerie went in. Philip lay on a cot by the window. His steel-blue eyes closed, his chestnut hair clinging in waves around his brow.

A flood of love, of tenderness, free from every touch of pride to wound—more pure, more perfect than she had ever felt—filled her heart.

"Philip," she whispered, bending over him, the roses stealing into her cheeks—"Philip, you told me once, oh, so long ago, that when love conquered pride I would come to you. Look up, Philip, my more than life! It is Valerie who calls you!"

And as Philip's eyes opened the opal filled with a sudden flash of dazzling light. As he looked into her

face, the fairest to him of any on earth, a smile of ineffable tenderness played around his lips; his face grew radiant with joy which no words could express.

"Again in my hour of need you have come to me. You will not leave me again, Valerie?"

"O Philip, never until death!"

He opened his arms and folded her to his heart.

"Valerie! Valerie! My love, my darling, now and forevermore!"